

# Far From Home

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## arliddian

Star Wars

Complete



## **Far From Home**

**arliddian**

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## Table of Contents

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Cover  
Title Page  
Copyright Information  
Table of Contents  
Summary  
Prologue  
Chapter One  
Chapter Two  
Chapter Three  
Chapter Four  
Chapter Five  
Chapter Six  
Chapter Seven  
Chapter Eight  
Chapter Nine  
Chapter Ten  
Chapter Eleven  
Chapter Twelve  
Chapter Thirteen  
Chapter Fourteen  
Chapter Fifteen  
Chapter Sixteen  
Chapter Seventeen  
Chapter Eighteen  
Epilogue

## Summary

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### Description:

AU. Padmé found the strength to go on and become a leader of the Alliance with Leia. Separated from Luke for his protection, she believes her husband is dead. And Vader believes his family is dead. One day they will all meet again...

# Prologue

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## Far From Home

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**Summary:** AU. Padmé found the strength to go on and become a leader of the Alliance with Leia. Separated from Luke for his protection, she believes her husband is dead. And Vader believes his family is dead. One day they will all meet again... WIP

**Characters:** All the usual ones from the original trilogy, plus Padmé.

**Timeframe:** Basic Original Trilogy timeframe, but I tweaked the ages a little. Luke and Leia are twenty and Han's twenty-seven. Anakin/Vader is forty-three, Padmé's forty-seven and Obi-Wan is fifty-five.

**Archive:** In the highly unlikely event that someone would actually want to archive this — ask and I'll say yes. Just let me know where it's going.

**Disclaimer:** All things recognisably Star Wars belong to George Lucas. I just like making up my own stories. ALL HAIL LUCAS!

**A/N:** *Italic* is thought. This story came from my irritation at Padmé losing the will to live, even though she had children. It will have parts obviously taken from the movies, and then parts that are obviously not. I took dialogue and such from the movie scripts, so credit to the movies. Due to my weirdness, there are a couple of songfic chapters worked into this story — the songs belong to the songwriters. This is also my first attempt to write the Original Trilogy characters, so I apologise for any OOC-ness. The prologue is first in Padmé's POV, then in Darth Vader's, set before the events of ANH. Please review — I go insanely happy when I get them, and I like being on that kind of high!

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## Prologue

I did not die.

I remember faintly hearing the droid tell Obi-Wan that I had lost the will to live. “*She’s dying?*” Obi-Wan had asked incredulously. They were right, in a way. My husband, my Anakin, had been my heart and my life. But he had turned away from me, away from the path of light and into darkness, taking a part of me with him. How could I live on when my husband was gone?

And yet, I did.

And all because of my beautiful children.

The last thing I said before I passed out was that there was still good in Anakin. And in my unconscious state, a part of me wanted desperately to let go.

*He's gone! it cried. What more do you have? The Republic is gone, your husband is gone — there's nothing left!*

No.

I had my children.

I would live for them, and keep them safe from the new threat of the Empire.

And so I hung on, and I woke up hours later.

Obi-Wan entered with my babies, my Luke and Leia, and placed them in my arms. The moment I saw his face, I knew that Anakin was dead. Yet I could not blame my friend — he had done what he had to, and the pain and grief etched on his face behind his sad half-smile told me that it had torn him apart to fight my husband.

That day, my children were separated. Leia came to live on Alderaan with Bail Organa's family and me, and Luke was sent to Tatooine to live with his uncle Owen and aunt Beru. Obi-Wan went with him, as his distant 'uncle'. He and Master Yoda said that my children would be better protected from the Emperor if they were separated. Nobody knew of their existence, and so they would be safe.

I adopted the family name of Organa, and Leia grew up with me and 'Uncle Bail'. I worked to found and lead the Rebel Alliance, and now my twenty-year-old daughter — a beautiful, headstrong young woman — is a leader of the Alliance. We fight against the oppression of the Empire. Against the Emperor and his new apprentice, Darth Vader. Against the sweeping tide of darkness that constantly threatens the galaxy.

My love for my Anakin weakened me — I had lost my edge, my fire. Even now, twenty years later, I keep thinking that if I had been stronger, I might have saved him. But I wasn't, and I didn't. Now, my love that once burned with as much heat as the volcanoes of Mustafar is a cold, dull pain that will burn again only when I am home again, reunited with my family. My love once made me weak, but I will not be weak again. My children need me to be strong. I will fight on for them. My love for them will make me strong.

---

I did not die.

I lay on the sands, slowly, painfully pulling myself up the embankment with my remaining arm. The stumps of what was left of my legs caught fire in the lava, and I watched in anger and agony as my former master turned away, unable to face what he believed was my demise. "I hate you!" I screamed at him as he struggled away. I rolled and beat the fire out and crawled as far as I could before collapsing.

When I awoke, I was clad in black, powerful with a new set of mechanical limbs, except for my left arm, which remained flesh. The power of the Dark Side flowed in my veins and I was ready to save my angel, my wife.

But then my Master revealed the truth.

She was dead.

I killed her.

I had nothing left. My wife and child gone, my 'family' gone, all at my hands. Nothing was left but the Emperor, the Dark Side and the anger and hatred and guilt that burned within me.

I could not bear to look upon the face of my wife's murderer. I constructed a mask to hide my face away, and my transformation into Darth Vader was complete.

Anakin Skywalker still lives within me somewhere, but I do not allow his voice to speak. I direct my anger and loathing away from myself so I cannot feel the pain, but I deserve to suffer for my deeds.

Even now, twenty years from her death, I will not speak her name aloud. I will not speak the name of my former Master, the man I thought was my brother.

Yet when I am alone, I cannot help remembering. I wait for relief from my daily torture, release from my prison, but still I live on. No freedom, no family, no home.

Will I never escape?

Will nobody save me?

I cannot save myself.

I am lost.



## Chapter One

---

**A/N:** Thank you to everyone who reviewed! I feel somewhat inadequate now — as if I can't live up to expectations (I've already completed writing this story). Hopefully, you will all like it! Here are some individual shout-outs.

**Countess Jackman:** Thank you! And yes, there will be drama. No, Vader does not NEED the mask to live, but he wears it to cover his OWN face (remember -Vader thinks he killed Padmè himself, because of what Palps told him). As for Anakin redemption — you'll just have to wait and see!

**purpletangerine** and **Hopeless4life:** Glad you're liking it! After this chapter, I will be updating every Friday afternoon (according to Australian time, anyway). Hope that's soon enough!

**Chou hime:** I'm glad you think this is a little different — I hope it is, anyway! Hope you like this chapter.

**Laura-chan:** Glad you like it! Thank you!

**vadersGrl:** Thank you for your review, and I'm glad you're enjoying this story!

Anyway, this chapter is extremely similar to ANH, but bear with me. Luke and Leia are twenty now, refer to the prologue for the other ages and disclaimers and such. Don't forget to leave a review!

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### Chapter One

"Luke, take these two over to the garage, will you? I want you to have both of them cleaned up before dinner."

Young Luke Skywalker sighed and turned to his uncle Owen. "But I was going into Toshi Station to pick up some power converters..." he protested, a hint of whining in his tone.

"You can waste time with your friends when your chores are done," Owen replied gruffly. "Now come on, get to it!"

"All right, all right," Luke said. He looked over at the two droids as his uncle paid the Jawa. "Come on, let's go."

The little Artoo unit whistled and followed him across to the Lars homestead entrance. Luke turned back and waved the golden protocol droid, See-Threepio, over.

"Come on!" he called. He turned back and paused a moment to stare out at the bleak sands.

*Am I ever going to get out of here?* he wondered. *There must be something more for me than this desert.*

He heard a beep and a whistle behind him, and turned to see Artoo-Detoo dancing about on the spot. He moved into the garage. The sooner he finished his chores, the sooner he could

escape.

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“Thank the maker! This oil bath is going to feel so good. I’ve got such a bad case of dust contamination, I can barely move!” See-Threepio exclaimed as he lowered himself into the tub in the garage.

Luke gave a faint smile, but was deep in thought. He slammed a wrench across the workbench, frustrated.

“It’s not fair! I’ll never get out of here!”

Threepio turned his head. “Is there anything I might do to help?” he asked politely.

Luke lifted a corner of his mouth in a wry half-smile. “Not unless you can alter time, speed up the harvest or teleport me off this rock!”

“I don’t think so, sir,” the droid replied. “I’m only a droid and not very knowledgeable about such things. Not on this planet, anyways. As a matter of fact, I’m not even sure which planet I’m on.”

“Well, if there’s a bright centre to the universe, you’re on the planet that it’s farthest from,” Luke informed him, somewhat bitterly. Tatooine was definitely not a homey planet to live on.

“I see, sir,” Threepio said.

“Uh, you can call me Luke.”

“I see, Sir Luke.”

Luke laughed. This droid was strange, but he liked it. Very polite. “Just Luke.”

“And I am See-Threepio, human-cyborg relations, and this is my counterpart, Artoo-Detoo,” Threepio introduced.

*Polite, but talkative*, Luke thought as he greeted Artoo. He unplugged the astromech droid and examined it. There was a small fragment of metal stuck in a joint, and it did not budge when he tugged on it.

“Well, my little friend, you’ve got something jammed in here real good,” he said as he used a pick to pry it loose. “Were you on a starcruiser or...”

The metal snapped and broke loose, and Luke was sent over backwards. When he sat up, the droid was projecting a little hologram of a beautiful young woman.

“Help me, Obi-Wan Kenobi. You’re my only hope,” she said. The hologram continued to repeat the fragment over and over again.

“Who is she? She’s beautiful,” Luke murmured, entranced. Somehow he felt... connected to her, though he didn’t even know who she was.

Artoo emitted a series of beeps and whistles, and Threepio translated.

“He says the whole message is for someone called Obi-Wan Kenobi, his owner. He says that it is a confidential message, and he needs to deliver it to this Obi-Wan Kenobi as soon as

possible. Do you know anyone by that name?"

Luke's eyes widened. "Obi-Wan Kenobi? He's my uncle! Well, sort of." He stared again at the hologram. "I'll take you to him as soon as I've cleaned you up. I want to see him anyway."

He knew that his uncle Obi-Wan and Uncle Owen disagreed on many points — perhaps Obi-Wan could help him fly away from this desolate desert planet.

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Princess Leia Organa winced as the stormtroopers shoved her forward. The bodies of her fallen comrades littered the corridors, and she allowed herself to grieve for them briefly. She had a faint sensation of foreboding as they marched her along the halls of the Rebel ship, but she pushed it away. All she felt now was relief that she had managed to get the plans off the ship, anxiety for the welfare of said plans, and anger at the Empire.

They stopped and then she saw a figure emerge from the smoke and shadows. It was him — Darth Vader. She immediately shoved her emotions aside. He fixed her with his sinister gaze, but she did not flinch. The Dark Lord did not frighten her.

"Lord Vader, I should have known," she said with a wry expression on her face. "Only you could be so bold. The Imperial Senate will not sit still for this. When they hear you've attacked a diplomatic —"

"Don't play games with me, Your Highness," Vader interrupted coldly. "You weren't on any mercy mission this time. You passed directly through a restricted system. Several transmissions were beamed to this ship by Rebel spies. I want to know what happened to the plans they sent you."

*Damn*, Leia thought briefly, though her face remained composed and impassive. "I don't know what you're talking about," she maintained. "I'm a member of the Imperial Senate on a diplomatic mission to Alderaan."

"You're a part of the Rebel Alliance — and a traitor. Take her away!" he ordered.

As the stormtroopers pushed her down the hall, Leia dimly heard the commander tell Vader, "She'll die before she'll tell you anything."

Princess Leia gave a tiny ironic smile. For once, the Empire's minions had gotten something right.

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"Uncle Obi-Wan!" Luke called as he and the two droids approached his uncle's hovel.

Obi-Wan looked up and smiled. "Hello, Luke." He stood up and waited for the boy to walk over to him. "What brings you here?"

"This little droid," Luke replied, gesturing to Artoo-Detoo. "He says he's got a message for you."

Obi-Wan peered at the astromech droid, which whistled and beeped at him. He blinked and his eyes returned to Luke. "I think you'd better come inside."

Luke followed him into the hovel, the droids ambling along behind. He could tell that Obi-Wan wanted to talk to him about something important — but what it was, he had no way of knowing.

He took a seat and watched as Obi-Wan fiddled with Artoo's controls. Suddenly, he asked, "Obi-Wan, what was my father like?" Thinking about the galaxy outside of Tatooine made him think about his father. He had stopped asking his uncle Owen years ago, as he was only given the most vague of answers. And he had never been alone with Obi-Wan long enough to ask before.

Obi-Wan paused for a moment before saying, "I'd have thought your uncle Owen would have told you."

"All I got out of uncle Owen was that he was a pilot," Luke told him.

"Yes, he was the best star-pilot in the galaxy. His skill saved me more than once during the wars."

"You fought in the Clone Wars?" Luke was surprised. He had never heard him mention the wars before. Then again, Uncle Owen never liked him going to visit Obi-Wan.

"Yes, I was once a Jedi Knight, the same as your father," Obi-Wan answered.

"A Jedi? My father was a Jedi?" Luke asked incredulously. He had heard stories about the Jedi from some of the old pilots.

"Oh, yes. He was a cunning warrior, and a very powerful Jedi. And he was a good friend. Which reminds me..." Obi-Wan trailed off and got up. He began rummaging through a chest and pulled out a shiny hilt, which he turned over in his hands slowly.

"I have something here for you. Your father wanted you to have this when you were old enough, but your uncle wouldn't allow it. He feared you might follow old Obi-Wan on some damned-fool idealistic crusade like your father did."

"Sir, if you'll not be needing me, I'll close down for a while," Threepio interjected.

"Sure, go ahead," Luke said distractedly. Obi-Wan handed him the hilt. "What is it?" the boy asked, examining it. It was fairly light and felt oddly comforting in his hand.

"Your father's lightsaber," Obi-Wan answered. "This is the weapon of a Jedi Knight. Not as clumsy or as random as a blaster. An elegant weapon for a more civilized time." He continued speaking quietly, remembering, as Luke activated the blade and waved it gently in the air. "For over a thousand generations the Jedi Knights were the guardians of peace and justice in the Old Republic. Before the dark times, before the Empire."

Luke powered down the lightsaber and turned back to Obi-Wan. "How did my father die?" he asked seriously. If his father had been a Jedi, he couldn't have died in a crash as Uncle Owen had once mentioned.

Obi-Wan seemed to gaze through him, and his face wore a slightly, almost imperceptibly, troubled expression as he answered the question. "A young Jedi named Darth Vader, who was

a pupil of mine until he turned to evil, helped the Empire hunt down and destroy the Jedi Knights. He betrayed and murdered your father. Now the Jedi are all but extinct. Vader was seduced by the dark side of the Force.”

“The Force?”

He seemed to come back to himself and smiled faintly at Luke. “The Force is what gives the Jedi his power,” he responded. “It’s an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together.”

Artoo-Detoo suddenly began to beep, and the two turned to the droid. Obi-Wan resumed his position in front of him.

“Now, let’s see if we can’t figure out what you are, my little friend. And where you came from.

The image of the young woman was again projected from Artoo.

“General Kenobi, years ago you served my father in the Clone Wars. Now he begs you to help him in his struggle against the Empire,” she said. “I regret that I am unable to present my father’s request to you in person, but my ship has fallen under attack and I’m afraid my mission to bring you to Alderaan has failed. I have placed information vital to the survival of the Rebellion into the memory systems of this R2 unit. My father will know how to retrieve it. You must see this droid safely delivered to him on Alderaan. This is our most desperate hour. Help me, Obi-Wan Kenobi. You’re my only hope.” The transmission ended.

Obi-Wan sat back and absently scratched his chin, deep in thought. Presently, he broke the silence. “You must learn the ways of the Force if you’re to come with me to Alderaan,” he said to Luke.

Luke laughed, thinking his uncle was not being serious. “Alderaan? I’m not going to Alderaan. I’ve got to go home. It’s late, I’m in for it as it is.”

“I need your help, Luke,” Obi-Wan insisted. “I’m getting too old for this sort of thing. She needs your help.”

“I can’t get involved! I’ve got work to do!” Luke exclaimed. “It’s not that I like the Empire, I hate it! But there’s nothing I can do about it right now. It’s such a long way from here.” His excuses sounded weak, even to him.

Obi-Wan looked at him impassively. “That’s your uncle talking,” he said.

Luke looked at him for a long moment, considering. Yes, he wanted to get away from Tatooine... but he didn’t want to abandon his aunt and uncle. “Look, I can take you as far as Anchorhead. You can get a transport there to Mos Eisley or wherever you’re going.”

Obi-Wan hid his smile. “You must do what you feel is right, of course.”

## Chapter Two

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**A/N:** Wow! Thank you to all my reviewers for your encouragement, and here is the next chapter! I'm so sorry it took me so long to post this, but locked my account for a little while because I hadn't taken off a songfic I'd written ages ago. Here's the next chapter for you now! The next one will come on Friday afternoon. But first, some individual shout-outs.

**Hopeless4Life:** Your wish is my command!

**zebraFinch:** Yes, it will be shocking, but it won't happen just yet! Glad you like the plot.

**Countess Jackman:** Thank you! And here is the next chapter. I'm not updating as fast as my first fic, but I hope you forgive me!

**LaPapillion:** Wow! Thank you! I'm glad you're liking it.

**doreenthatshot:** Thank you :)

**Stephanie C:** Yeah, I thought I'd like Luke to have known Obi-Wan before... and yes, it does make it so they had a kind of family relationship, although Owen wouldn't let Luke see Obi-Wan much at all. Thanks for your review!

**Sweet'Lovely:** Thank you! Here is the next chapter for you :)

**The Broken Bow:** Aww, thank you. Glad you like it :)

**TriGemini:** Thanks! Hopefully the rest of the story is to your liking, too.

**Aladailey:** I'm glad you chose to read this fic! I'm a fairly big fan of the prequels myself, and I tend to write more on them, but I felt that I needed to write in the wonderful classic Original Trilogy. I hope I'm doing it justice!

This chapter is more focused on Padmé, so just assume that everything on Tatooine happened as normal. Enjoy!

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### Chapter Two

Luke raced home across the wasteland in his landspeeder. He and Obi-Wan had found the remains of the Jawas that had sold the Lars family the two droids — they had all been slaughtered by Imperial stormtroopers. The droids had been traced.

The fear and panic rising in Luke's throat threatened to overwhelm him, and it was all he could do not to break down when he saw the homestead.

It was in ruins — smoking holes in the ground all that was left of his home, his childhood. Debris littered the area, and it was obvious that some kind of battle had taken place. As much as he hated Tatooine, it was the only home he had ever known, and his aunt and uncle had loved him for his whole life.

Luke leapt out of the speeder and stumbled around, calling his uncle and aunt's names. Then he saw them — or what was left of them. Stunned, all he could do was stare. *How could I have let this happen?* His fear was slowly being burnt up in the fire of his anger.

*The Empire did this, he thought, clenching his fists. They have destroyed everything right and just in the galaxy. They will not get away with it.*

He turned abruptly and jumped back into the speeder.

Obi-Wan looked up from the bonfire of the dead Jawas as Luke approached. As soon as he saw his face, he knew that what he had feared was true. He walked over to him.

“There’s nothing you could have done, Luke, had you been there,” he said, placing a hand on the boy’s shoulder. “You’d have been killed, too, and the droids would now be in the hands of the Empire.”

Luke turned to him, and his face, though grieved, was steady. “I want to come with you to Alderaan. There’s nothing left for me now.” He looked at Obi-Wan, and his gaze was resolute. “I want to learn the ways of the Force and become a Jedi like my father.”

---

Leia watched defiantly as the stormtroopers opened her cell door and let the Imperial guards in. *Nothing you can do will make me betray the Rebellion*, she thought, somewhat smugly. But then the torture droid entered, followed by Darth Vader. She shrank back as his menacing presence filled the tiny cell.

“And now, Your Highness, we will discuss the location of your hidden Rebel base,” Vader stated as the torture droid moved forward.

She glared at the Dark Lord despite her fear. She didn’t care what they did to her — if they killed her, the Rebellion’s secrets would die with her.

Just before the droid’s hypodermic needle touched her, Leia squeezed her eyes shut.

*Mother!* she screamed silently. And then she was lost in a haze of sharp pain.

---

Padmé sat up in her bed, eyes wide. Something told her that something was wrong — very wrong.

*Leia...*

She leapt out of bed and grabbed her robe, heading out the door. She knew Bail would still be awake — she had retired much earlier than normal, and it was still relatively early in the evening.

Bail was walking down the hall to her room, his face troubled. When he spotted her, he stopped and waited for her to approach.

“Bail, what has happened?” Padmé asked bluntly.

He looked at her for a moment, slightly taken aback. Regaining his composure, he answered gravely, “We have picked up a distress signal from the Rebel Blockade Runner. It appears that they were attacked by an Imperial Star Destroyer.”

Padmé’s hand touched her mouth. “Leia?” she whispered, dreading the answer.

“We believe she has been captured and is imprisoned on the Death Star,” Bail said gently, his face full of compassion and sorrow.

She turned away and blinked rapidly to dispel the tears forming rapidly in her eyes. *Not my daughter... not my daughter!*

*Stop being weak!* she ordered herself, shaking her head slightly. *You swore you would be strong. Are you going to stay here and do nothing?*

She turned back to Bail, her mouth set in a grimly determined line. “Bail, prepare a ship for me. I’m going to help her.”

“Padmé, it’s too dangerous!” he exclaimed, following her as she walked down the hall. “Darth Vader is on board that Death Star. We need you in the Rebellion.”

She stopped walking and turned to her friend. “I will not stay here on Alderaan while my daughter is being tortured. The Rebellion needs her. I need her.” She took his hand in hers and fixed him with an intense gaze. “I will bring her back, Bail. I won’t lose her.”

---

Luke followed Obi-Wan and a Wookiee called Chewbacca to a booth where the starpilot, Han Solo, sat. A young man of about twenty-seven, he looked tough and confident, and greeted them with a cocky smirk.

“Han Solo. I’m captain of the Millennium Falcon,” he introduced himself matter-of-factly, sizing them up. “Chewie here tells me you’re looking for passage to the Alderaan system.”

“Yes indeed,” Obi-Wan answered. “If it’s a fast ship,” he added.

“Fast ship? You’ve never heard of the Millennium Falcon?” Han sounded incredulous.

Obi-Wan raised an eyebrow. “Should I have?”

“It’s the ship that made the Kessel run in less than twelve parsecs!”

The old Jedi looked unimpressed.

“I’ve outrun Imperial starships. Not the local bulk-cruisers, mind you,” Han continued boasting. “I’m talking about the big Corellian ships. She’s fast enough for you, old man. What’s the cargo?”

“Only passengers,” Obi-Wan answered. “Myself, the boy, two droids —” he leaned forward slightly, emphasising his next words: “— and no questions asked.”

“What is it?” Solo asked, a little curious. “Some kind of local trouble?”

Obi-Wan gave a small, mirthless smile. “Let’s just say we’d like to avoid any Imperial entanglements.”

The ghost of a smirk twisted the smuggler’s lips. “Well, that’s the real trick, isn’t it? And it’s going to cost you something extra. Ten thousand in advance.”

“Ten thousand?” Luke cried indignantly. “We could almost buy our own ship for that!”

“But who’s going to fly it, kid? You?” Han scoffed.



“You bet I could! I’m not such a bad pilot myself!” Luke shot back. He turned to his companion, fed up. “We don’t have to sit here and listen...”

Obi-Wan held out his hand, silencing the young man. To Han, he said, “We haven’t that much with us. But we could pay you two thousand now, plus fifteen when we reach Alderaan.”

“Seventeen, huh?” Han pondered the offer for a few moments. “Okay. You guys got yourself a ship. We’ll leave as soon as you’re ready. Docking bay Ninety-four.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “Ninety-four.”

---

Only when she was a few parsecs away from the Death Star did Padmé realise that she didn’t have a plan.

*What were you going to do? Fly right up to them and demand Leia’s release when you have no weapons and nothing to bargain with?* she chastised herself. *You fool, Padmé.*

The space station loomed before her, and she was suddenly aware of the magnitude of the Alliance’s enemy. She did not know the full extent of the Death Star’s power, and she did not wish to ever find out. A prayer went forth silently from her lips — not only for her daughter’s safety, but also for the success of Leia’s mission. If she had failed, the Rebellion — and the galaxy — was doomed.

*How am I going to get her out?* she thought frantically. *The station is believed to be fully operational, and it will be crawling with stormtroopers...*

Perhaps leaving by herself with no plan of attack was not such a smart thing to do. Brave, but foolhardy. Somewhere in her zeal to be stronger, she seemed to have lost her logic.

*Maybe I should return with reinforcements, and we can cause some damage as well as rescue Leia,* she rationalized. Nodding resolutely, she began to reverse her starfighter.

Nothing happened.

Panicking, she checked the systems. They were all fully functioning. So why was she still travelling towards the Death Star?

She glanced up at the station and her body crew colder.

A tractor beam.

They had her.

She was trapped.

---

“My Lord, we have captured an Alderaanian starfighter. The pilot is the mother of Princess Leia.”

“Very well,” the cold voice of Darth Vader cut through his black mask. “Put her in a cell. I will question both of them later.”

“Yes, my Lord.” The stormtrooper nodded and hurried off.

Behind his faceless helmet, the Dark Lord smiled faintly. Now he had two Rebel leaders in his iron grip. They might have stolen the plans to the Death Star, but he would ensure that the Rebels never got a chance to use them. Soon the Rebellion would fall, just as the Old Republic did. Just as the Jedi Order did.

He would destroy them.

## Chapter Three

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**A/N:** Thank you for your reviews! They make me smile every morning and get me through another day of boredom.  
So here it is! The ‘long-awaited’ “confrontation”. Not much of a confrontation... but... oh, you’ll see ;)

**Chou hime:** Thank you! No, I didn’t know that. Are you sure? Anyway, hope you like this chapter.

**Stephanie C:** You need wait no more! I hope you like it :)

**TriGemini:** Yes, that just about sums up the end of the chapter. No need to wait — Vader ‘meets’ Padmé today!

**LaPapillion:** No! Don’t die! You have to read this chapter! lol.

**tensixtythree:** Okay — here you go!

**Laura-chan:** Yes! This chapter involves a Vader-Padmé confrontation! I really hope you’ll like it

**Jedi Knight Emerald Tyrande:** Wow — thank you for your review! I’m glad you like it. I hope that my next chapters meet your expectations!

**sMHL:** Yes, it’s quite odd. Glad you’re enjoying the story. Thanks for your review!

**Starclipper01:** Thank you for pointing that out! I hadn’t thought of that. Let’s assume she was questioned. Glad you liked it anyway!

**Mizra:** I definitely agree! Such an odd way to kill her off. Glad you like the story.

So here it is — enjoy!

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### Chapter Three

Leia’s cell door slid open and two stormtroopers entered.

“You’re to come with us,” one of them said mechanically.

She rolled her eyes and held out her hands. They bound them together and marched her out of the cell.

Another group of troopers, also holding a female prisoner, was heading to the cellblock. Leia’s guards stopped to talk to the others, and the Princess’s eyes widened when she saw the other woman.

“Mother?” she breathed, completely shocked.

Padmé gave her daughter a rueful smile. *Sorry*, she mouthed. Then she was marched away.

Leia knitted her eyebrows together in confusion and worry. *Why is she here? Is she all right?* Her thoughts were cut short when Vader appeared a second later. He beckoned, and Leia was marched wordlessly on after him. They entered the control room of the Death Star, and halted before Grand Moff Tarkin, who was standing in front of a huge wall screen.

“Governor Tarkin. I should have expected to find you holding Vader’s leash,” Leia commented wryly. “I recognised your foul stench when I was brought on board.”

Tarkin returned her derisive smirk. “Charming to the last. You don’t know how hard I found it signing the order to terminate your life!”

“I’m surprised you had the courage to take the responsibility yourself!” she retorted.

The governor continued. “Princess Leia, before your execution I would like you to be my guest at a ceremony that will make this battle station operational. No star system will dare oppose the Emperor now.”

“The more you tighten your grip, Tarkin, the more star systems will slip through your fingers.”

“Not after we demonstrate the power of this station.” Tarkin’s lips curved into a cruel smile. “In a way, you have determined the choice of the planet that’ll be destroyed first. Since you are reluctant to provide us with the location of the Rebel base, I have chosen to test this station’s destructive power...” he gestured to the screen behind him, “— on your home planet of Alderaan.”

“No!” Leia cried, struggling against her bonds. “Alderaan is peaceful. We have no weapons. You can’t possibly —”

“You would prefer another target? A military target? Then name the system!” Tarkin waved menacingly towards the young woman. “I grow tired of asking this. So it’ll be the last time. Where is the Rebel base?”

A voice over the intercom announced the approach to Alderaan. Leia paused, fear growing in her body. She had to protect Alderaan — but she couldn’t betray the Rebellion.

“Dantooine,” she said softly, lowering her head. “They’re on Dantooine.”

“There. You see, Lord Vader, she can be reasonable,” Tarkin said triumphantly. He turned to Admiral Motti. “Continue with the operation. You may fire when ready.”

“What?” Leia cried, snapping her head up.

The smirk on Tarkin’s face made her feel sick. “You’re far too trusting. Dantooine is too remote to make an effective demonstration. But don’t worry. We will deal with your Rebel friends soon enough.”

“No!” Leia screamed, struggling all the more. But the hands of her captors held her fast and she was powerless, powerless to keep her home and her friends from certain doom.

She hid her face from the screen. She could not bear to watch.

It was all her fault.

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Vader’s black boots snapped against the floor as he stalked to the cellblock. He was pleased. The princess had been broken, and the Death Star unleashed. All he had to do was

interrogate the mother. Now that her planet and family had been destroyed, this task would be much easier.

He paused for a second. Her planet... a whole planet was gone. Not only the humans, but the wildlife and the history as well — everything erased within moments. All in the name of the Empire.

It did not give him the satisfaction he had expected.

Millions of lives had been snuffed out, and while Vader was sure that some Rebels were among the dead, he felt the pain of the innocents who had died. No doubt even pregnant wives were lost now, stolen from this life just as his was. He halted — he thought he felt someone near — a presence just like his wife's. His —

*Do not speak her name!* he ordered himself as he resumed walking. *She is dead. Gone.*

Somewhere deep within, a tiny voice whispered, *And you couldn't save her, despite your powers...*

He clenched his dark fists and strode more purposefully. *That may be so, but I will never fail again. I have more power than any man could dream of! I have no need for her any longer.*

The door of the cell slid open, and the woman inside turned disdainfully, her greying brown curls swinging limply.

Vader froze in shock and utter disbelief.

It was her.

It was his wife.

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Padmé's breath caught in her throat when she saw Vader. She was afraid of what he was going to do to her, and what he had done to Leia. Her eyes were red from crying — she had heard that Alderaan had been destroyed.

Strangely, he did not move or speak — he simply stood there, his gaze boring through her though she could not see his eyes behind the mask. She grew bolder, and crossed her arms.

"What do you want, Vader?" she snapped. She narrowed her eyes at him. "If you plan to weasel Rebel information out of me, you might as well kill me now. I will tell you nothing."

"You're... alive." Vader's voice seemed almost uncertain.

Padmé raised her eyebrows slightly. "It would appear that I am," she commented dryly. "If you do not intend to torture or interrogate me, could you at least have the decency to let me see my daughter?"

"Your —" He seemed to stiffen. "Our daughter."

"Our?" she repeated, dumbstruck. She shook her head, and the look on her face was one of pure venom. "What are you trying to do, Vader? Turn her to the Dark Side? Make her join you? She will never join you."

“No. You will join me.”

“Never,” she hissed. She would not turn her back on the fragments of what she had worked her whole life to preserve. She would never follow the path that had destroyed her husband. She would never abandon her children.

“You would turn your back on your husband?”

She blinked. “What?” *What kind of twisted plot is this? Marry Vader? Never.*

“You do not have to marry me,” Vader said in answer to her thoughts. She had forgotten that the Sith — like the Jedi — could often sense thoughts and feelings.

“No,” he continued. “You do not have to because you already have.”

She stared for a second, and then the meaning behind his words hit her. She stepped back, her shock reflected on her face.

“No. No! My husband is dead. He was killed twenty years ago!” *He’s gone, he’s not here, he can’t be here...*

He took a step forward, reaching out to her. “Not killed, my wife. I am still here. Still alive. And now we can be together.” He sounded almost eager, almost like the Anakin she —

“No!” She backed away until she hit the wall, tears forming in her eyes, though she did not know why she was crying. He reached out to her and she shrank away. It couldn’t be Anakin. How could her Anakin possibly become this... this monster?

And yet, she remembered the last time she spoke to her husband...

*“You turned to the Dark side and killed Younglings... you are going down a path I can’t follow...”*

The tears in her eyes burned her like acid as she stared into the mask of Darth Vader. “Stay away from me,” she hissed. This man, to whom she once had given her heart and her life, had assisted in the destruction of democracy. He had broken her heart and rejected her, choosing to believe she had betrayed him. He had supported an Empire that was corrupt and oppressive. And now he had tortured her — *their* — daughter and destroyed an entire planet. He was not the Anakin she remembered. He was not the husband she still loved. He was Darth Vader, a Sith.

Stunned, Vader lowered his arm and stepped back. Why was she responding this way? Couldn’t she see that it was the Dark Side that had saved her?

He narrowed his eyes. The Princess’s name was Leia Organa. Could it be that the senator, Bail Organa, had...

*No. Even if she thought I was dead, Padmé would never be unfaithful,* he reasoned, calming down. *In any case, Organa is dead now.*

He looked again at his wife, who was still glaring shakily at him. He reached out with the Force to her, and sensed her feelings.

There was shock, and anger at his deeds. Yet there was something else — despair.

She was despairing for the man he used to be.

The thought angered him. Wasn't it enough that he was alive? Wasn't it enough that he had saved her? He had silenced the weak, foolish Anakin — the one whose powers had not been enough to save her. He would not emerge again.

Vader turned abruptly and exited the cell. Coming towards him was Princess Leia and her guards. For a moment, Vader looked at her. His daughter.

He wondered why he had not recognised it before. She had the same eyes as her mother, the same stubborn spirit — even a similar Force-signature.

She shot him a glare, and the stormtroopers began to take her to her cell.

“Stop,” Vader commanded. Despite her abhorrence of him, he still loved his wife, and so he would give her this chance. “Put the Princess in the cell with her mother.”

“Yes, sir,” the trooper responded.

Vader walked on, noting the surprise on his daughter's face as she was pushed into the cell. Soon, Tarkin would order Leia's execution. Vader would delay it as long as he could, but his duty was to the Empire.

But he would not let his wife slip from him again.

## Chapter Four

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**A/N:** Sorry this is a little late — I wasn't able to get onto a computer yesterday. The second half of this chapter used to be a songfic to Kelly Clarkson's Behind These Hazel Eyes, but in accordance to guidelines, I have deleted the lyrics and edited the chapter to work without them. Hopefully it still makes sense!

**StephanieC:** Yeah, I'm inclined to agree. He's a little... difficult. Lol. Here's the next chapter for you!

**TriGemini:** Hehe. You ask all the right questions! All will be answered and revealed soon.

**pokey:** Yep -unfortunately things won't get that much better for her for a while. There's a lot of Padmé-angst in this chapter.

**tensixtythree:** Your wish is my command!

**LaPapillion:** Lol, yep, they sure can. I think Vader's a very tragic character — more misguided than evil, in my opinion.

**Laura-chan:** Yes, I got the sarcasm, lol. I'm glad you liked the confrontation! Thank you for your lovely review.

**vadersGrl:** Thank you! I'm glad you like it.

**Miss.S.P.:** Welcome to fanfiction! Thank you for choosing to read this story. I'm glad you like it!

**DarthLady14:** Thanks for your review! It was lovely. Yes, the basis of writing this story was what it would have been like if Padmé was alive. Glad you like it!

**Emily:** Thank you! Glad you're enjoying the story.

That being said, read on!

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## Chapter Four

Luke stared at the remains of Alderaan. An entire planet obliterated. He knew that Obi-Wan had sensed the destruction — but they did not have time to talk about it now. Han was navigating the Falcon around the space dust, following a small TIE fighter in an attempt to silence it.

"He's heading for that small moon," Luke observed, pointing.

"I think I can get him before he gets there," Han said. "He's almost in range."

As they approached, it slowly became clear that it was not a moon.

"That's no moon — that's a space station," Obi-Wan said, eyes wide.

"It's too big to be a space station," Han replied, nonplussed.

Luke muttered, "I have a very bad feeling about this."

"Turn the ship around!" Obi-Wan ordered.



Han stared at the monstrous station in growing apprehension. “Yeah, I think you’re right. Full reverse! Chewie, lock in the auxiliary power.”

The ship shuddered, but they continued to move forwards.

“Why are we still moving towards it?” Luke cried, panicking.

“We’re caught in a tractor beam! It’s pulling us in!” Han replied, flipping switches frantically.

“But there’s gotta be something you can do!” Luke exclaimed.

“There’s nothin’ I can do about it, kid. I’m in full power. I’m going to have to shut down. But they’re not going to get me without a fight!”

Obi-Wan placed a hand on the pilot’s shoulder. “You can’t win,” he said calmly and evenly. “But there are alternatives to fighting.”

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The conference room in the Death Star was cold and almost hostile, but Vader did not notice or care. He stood with Tarkin and Imperial Officer Cass.

“Our scout ships have reached Dantooine,” Officer Cass reported. “They found the remains of a Rebel base, but they estimate that it has been deserted for some time. They are now conducting an extensive search of the surrounding systems.”

“She lied! She lied to us!” Tarkin was incensed.

Behind his mask, Vader controlled his urge to roll his eyes. Tarkin was never good at reading people. “I told you she would never consciously betray the Rebellion.”

“Terminate her... immediately!” Tarkin barked.

A strange, cold fear swept through Vader, an emotion he had not felt in years. For a moment, he froze — but then he repeated in his mind a lesson he had learned from Darth Sidious.

*Fear leads to anger, anger leads to hate. Fear gives you direction. Anger gives you strength. Hatred gives you power.*

Vader breathed deeply and let the power of the Dark Side flow through him. He flexed his fingers, ready for the task. He would not kill his own daughter. Not when she did not know who he was.

The intercom buzzed. Tarkin pressed a button.

“Yes,” he answered curtly.

“We’ve captured a freighter entering the remains of the Alderaan system. Its markings match those of a ship that blasted its way out of Mos Eisley.”

“They must be trying to return the stolen plans to the princess,” Vader said. “She may yet be of some use to us.” He felt a vague sensation of relief, but he pushed it aside. Now he had to carry out his duty — there was not time to dwell on sentimentality.

He walked into docking bay 2037 as an officer and several armed troops exited the spacecraft that had been pulled in.

The officer approached. "There's no one on board, sir," he said. "According to the log, the crew abandoned ship right after takeoff. It must be a decoy, sir. Several of the escape pods have been jettisoned."

"Did you find any droids?" the Sith Lord questioned.

"No, sir. If there were any on board, they must also have jettisoned."

"Send a scanning crew on board. I want every part of this ship checked," Vader ordered.

"Yes, sir."

Vader looked around. He felt a strange tug on his mind, one that had been forgotten, but was very familiar. "I sense something... a presence I haven't felt since..."

He left the hangar abruptly. He did not wish to revisit that chapter of his life. It was over now. Over.

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Tears blurred Padmé's eyes. It had been twenty-three years since she married Anakin Skywalker on Naboo, but the memory of their love was still warm and fresh in her heart. She remembered it like it was yesterday. She had been brave then. She had been strong. The weakness did not set in until years later.

They had been on the brink of war, but when he had leaned down and kissed her, danger and fear had slipped away and it felt like they were the only ones in the galaxy. Just them. Together. And nothing could go wrong.

In one sentence, her world had come crashing down around her. How could her sweet husband have become a man so evil? A man who could do all these horrible things? This awful revelation left her broken, and she felt like she could barely keep her head up.

Long ago, his turn to the Dark Side had ripped her apart. Now the pain and despair she had felt then were creeping over her, swallowing her all over again, tearing her heart and her mind into shreds. The dull pain in her heart, the pain she had felt when the twins were born, now throbbed, fresh and new.

Leia sat down beside her and slipped her arm around her shoulders. "Are you all right?" she asked gently.

Padmé turned to her daughter, so grateful for her. Even in the midst of her grief for Alderaan, she still cared about her mother. She still was a caring and loving daughter.

She slowly shook her head. She couldn't lie. "No," she whispered, hoarse from her tears. *I can't keep being strong... Anakin, how could you?* She wanted to cry those words aloud, not just in her mind. She wanted to scream and yell and sob until her husband felt her pain.

No — Darth Vader could not see her pain. He must not. She couldn't allow it. He could try to use it against her — and while this was something she would never have thought Anakin capable of, it certainly was something Vader would do. Somehow she had to hide it from him.

Yet how could she hide anything from him? He knew her completely, had loved her everything, and it had been his complete knowledge of her that had comforted her long ago. The way he knew exactly how she felt had made her feel safe and loved. But she had to try to hide her emotions — she had to try for her children.

She gathered her daughter close and held her tightly.

“What did he do to you?” Leia asked, her voice quiet but trembling with worry and anger.

Padmé pulled away slightly and forced a weak smile. She couldn’t burden Leia with this knowledge — not yet. She was tired of covering up and pretending to be strong... but she couldn’t let Leia see her weakness — not yet. It was not time to reveal the whole truth yet. “I’ll — I’ll be fine. He just... frightened me, that’s all.”

Leia gave her a long, searching look, but nodded. “All right, Mother.” She stretched out along the bench, ready to sleep, placing her head on her mother’s lap as she had when she was a child.

Padmé smiled faintly and lightly stroked her daughter’s forehead. She began to sink again into her dark memories, unable to stop the tide.

Her thoughts turned to that terrible day on Mustafar. The sting of his words cut her deeply — “*You betrayed me!*” Believing he had died was much less painful than knowing he was alive now, nothing more than a Sith Lord, all his values and ethics completely reversed. And it did not just feel like he had betrayed his values — it felt like he had rejected her, spit her out.

For a long time after the twins’ birth, she had hated the way he had left her weak and lost. Losing him had almost killed her, and she had begrudged his memory for it. But after a month, she could not hate him any more. She still loved him. He was her husband, her everything. And he had given her two beautiful children, who had become her reason for living.

Yes, Padmé still loved Anakin Skywalker — and that was why she despaired now.

Anakin Skywalker had vanished now into the depth of Vader’s darkness, and it hurt Padmé more than when he had choked her twenty years ago. Again, one question echoed in her mind — *Anakin, how could you?*

She glanced down at her daughter, who now seemed to peacefully sleeping. As she gazed into her beautiful young face, she remembered her promise to her babies. She had sworn she would be strong for Luke and Leia.

Padmé quickly flicked her tears away. She would keep her promise. The pain and tears would always live within her as long as Vader lived, but she would not let them surface anymore.

Anakin Skywalker was gone. It didn’t matter how she looked at it — Anakin was not there.

She shifted and leaned back against the cell wall. But was he really gone? Why had Vader not killed her and Leia? Surely he would have hurt her somehow, if there was no good left... Was there hope? Or was she clinging onto a dream?

The door suddenly flew open in a cloud of smoke, and a lone stormtrooper rushed in. Leia sat up abruptly and stared at the trooper, who was simply staring at her. Padmé raised an eyebrow, peering through the smoke.

“Aren’t you a little short for a stormtrooper?” Leia commented, not without some sarcasm. Even after torture and grief, she could find something to laugh at.

“What? Oh — the uniform,” the trooper said. He removed his helmet, revealing a young face with bright blue eyes and dark blond hair. Padmé stared — could it be...? “I’m Luke Skywalker, and I’m here to rescue you!”

*Luke?* Padmé was frozen to the bench in shock. Her son — here on the Death Star. In her cell. With her daughter — his twin. *My whole family, reunited — and I’m the only one who knows.*

“You’re who?” Leia asked, confused. Padmé tried to disguise her shock.

“I’m here to rescue you. I’ve got your R2 unit. I’m here with Obi-Wan Kenobi —”

“Obi-Wan? Where is he?” Leia leapt to her feet and began to follow the young man out of the cell. She stopped and turned back. “Come on, Mother!” she called, beckoning.

Almost in a daze, Padmé rose and hurried after her children.

## Chapter Five

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**A/N:** So here it is, chapter five — the Great Escape continues. Enjoy!

**TriGemini:** Thank you so much for your reviews! I love them so much, I just can't tell you how much I appreciate them. I'm so glad you're enjoying this story, and I hope it keeps up with your expectations!

**LaPapillion:** Wow! Thanks for your review — I'm glad my story gives you that kind of (good) reaction!

**pokey:** Yeah, Padmé doesn't fare too well, does she? Still, she's strong, so it'll be okay! (Or will it? hehe)

**Jokerisdaking:** Thank you for your review! Glad you're liking it

**Laura-chan:** The Grinch, eh? Lol. Thanks for your review!

**tensixtythree:** Thank you!

**Stephanie C:** Thanks! Glad you liked it

**eridani:** Wow, that's exactly what I wanted to capture — subtly in significance. Thank you for noticing it! And I'm glad you like my story.

**Emily:** Thank you! Your wish is my command.

**Chou hime:** Glad you're enjoying it! Is it really different from other Padmé-lives fics? Myself, I haven't read many. Well, if it is, I'm glad!

**Hopeless4Life:** Thank you!

**SassyJazz:** Haha, yeah, see you Schneider, but next time why not actually review my story? lol.

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## Chapter Five

"He is here..." Vader muttered, pacing the room.

"Obi-Wan Kenobi!" Tarkin exclaimed. "What makes you think so?"

"A tremor in the Force," the Sith answered. "The last time I felt it was in the presence of my old master."

"Surely he must be dead by now."

Vader stopped pacing and fixed Tarkin with his black gaze. "Don't underestimate the Force."

"The Jedi are extinct, their fire has gone out of the universe," Tarkin declared. "You, my friend, are all that's left of their religion."

A comlink buzzed. "Yes?" Tarkin acknowledged.

"Governor Tarkin, we have an emergency alert in detention block AA-23."

Tarkin jumped to his feet and yelped, "The princess! Put all sections on alert!"

“Obi-Wan is here,” Vader stated again calmly. “The Force is with him.”

Tarkin turned and stared at the Dark Lord. “If you’re right, he must not be allowed to escape.”

“Escape may not be his plan. I must face him alone.”

---

Luke, Leia and Padmé ran down the hallway and met up with Han and Chewbacca, who were rushing towards them.

“Can’t get out that way,” Han said breathlessly, his face flushed.

“Looks like you managed to cut off our only escape route,” Leia agreed, annoyed.

Han looked her up and down. “Maybe you’d like it back in your cell, Your Highness,” he said sarcastically.

Stormtroopers were beginning to make their way down the corridor, opening fire on the small group. Luke pulled a comlink from his belt.

“See-Threepio! See-Threepio!” he cried.

“Yes, sir?” the droid’s voice answered.

“We’ve been cut off! Are there any other ways out of the cell bay?” Static crackled as Han and Chewbacca fired at the troopers. “What was that? I didn’t copy!”

Threepio answered more clearly. “I said, all systems have been alerted to your presence, sir. The main entrance seems to be the only way out; all other information on your level is restricted.”

Smoke billowed in the corridor, making it difficult to see. They were badly outnumbered — they had to get out of there quickly.

“There isn’t any other way out,” Luke told them.

“I can’t hold them off forever!” Han yelled over the roar of the blasters. “Now what?”

“This is some rescue,” Leia’s irritated voice broke in. She eyed the two men. “When you came in here, didn’t you have a plan for getting out?”

Padmé looked at her daughter, and recognising the familiar glint in her eye — one she herself often had — she wisely kept silent.

Han, however, did not. He pointed to Luke. “He’s the brains, sweetheart.”

Luke shrugged sheepishly. “Well, I didn’t —”

Leia suddenly snatched Luke’s blaster from him and fired at a small grate in the wall.

“What are you doing?” Han yelled.

Padmé smiled, surprised at her daughter’s ingenuity. *Then again, she is a mixture of Anakin and I*, she thought, ignoring the pang of sadness she felt at Anakin’s name.

Leia lifted her chin. "Somebody has to save our skins," she answered the smuggler. "Into the garbage chute, fly boy. You coming, Mother?"

With that, she jumped feet first into the narrow opening.

Padmé gave the amazed men a small smile that seemed as if she was apologising for her daughter's behaviour, yet approving it all the same. "You'd better do as she says," she said, and then she disappeared into the opening after Leia.

Chewbacca sniffed the garbage chute and growled.

"Get in there you big furry oaf!" Han ordered. "I don't care what you smell! Get in there and don't worry about it."

He kicked him swiftly, and the Wookiee jumped in reluctantly.

Luke and Han began to work their way back to the opening.

"Wonderful girl!" Han commented to Luke about the Princess. "Either I'm going to kill her or I'm beginning to like her. Get in there!"

Luke ducked the continuing fire and leapt into the darkness.

Han fired a few more blasts to create a smoky cover, and then slid into the chute.

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Han tumbled down the chute into a large room filled with muck. The other four were stumbling around the garbage, trying to find an exit. Luke spotted a small hatchway, and struggled to open it — but it wouldn't move.

"Oh! The garbage chute was a really wonderful idea. What an incredible smell you've discovered!" Han commented sardonically. 'Let's get out of here!' He gestured at Luke. "Get away from there..."

Luke cried, "No! Wait!"

Han drew his pistol and fired at the hatch. The bolt ricocheted around the metal room, and everyone ducked as it exploded almost on top of them. Leia scrambled out of the garbage, wearing a very grim expression.

"Will you forget it? I already tried it. It's magnetically sealed!" Luke told Han.

"Put that thing away!" Leia ordered angrily. "You're going to get us all killed."

"Absolutely, your Worship," Han said mordantly. "Look, I had everything under control until you led us down here. You know, it's not going to take them long to figure out what happened to us."

"Look, everybody calm down, all right?" Padmé cut in diplomatically as she climbed out of the trash, her voice sounding a little strained. She hadn't found her son only to lose both her children now. "Let's just try and figure out a way we can escape. Yelling at each other won't help our situation."

Leia continued to glare at Han, but decided to drop it. "It could be worse..."

Suddenly, the walls began to rumble.

“What was that?” Padmé said, staring around the room in alarm.

“I’ve got a very bad feeling about this...” Han muttered. Chewbacca howled his agreement as the walls began to edge towards the Rebels.

“The walls are moving!” Luke cried.

“Don’t just stand there!” Leia snapped, rushing to a pole sticking out of the trash.

Padmé ran over to help. “Try and brace it with something!” she instructed the others.

They all tried to stop the walls using beams and poles, but these simply bent and snapped like twigs as the compactor continued its crushing journey.

Luke yanked his comlink out of his belt. “Threepio! Come in Threepio! Threepio! Where could he be?”

The room kept getting relentlessly smaller and smaller. Whining, Chewbacca tried to hold a wall back, pushing against it with all his great strength — but to no avail. Within a minute, the walls were only feet apart. Forced to turn sideways, Leia and Han were now facing each other. The haughty look on the Princess’s face was gone, replaced with one of fear. Impulsively, she reached out and grabbed her mother’s hand on her left and Han’s in front of her, squeezing both tightly as the closing walls contracted.

Suddenly, Luke’s comlink buzzed. “Threepio!”

“Are you there, sir?” the droid replied. “We’ve had some minor problems. You would not believe —”

“Shut up, Threepio!” Luke screamed into the comlink. “And shut down all the refuse units on the detention level or immediately below it. Do you copy? Shut down the refuse —”

Several tense, frightening moments ticked by — but then the walls halted and began to reverse directions.

The group began to screech and yell in relief. Padmé held her daughter close, hugging her as though she would never let go. She was about to reach out to Luke, but caught herself just in time — he still didn’t know who she was.

“Artoo, Threepio!” Luke hollered into the comlink. “It’s all right, we’re all right! Do you read me? We’re okay — you did just fine.”

He pushed through the sludge to the hatch cover and scraped away the slime to read the number. “Open the pressure-maintenance hatch on unit 360-117891.”

“Yes, sir,” Threepio acknowledged.

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Obi-wan edged his way across the walkway over the service trench. His steps were careful and precise, though his eyes were focused on the terminal ahead.



He slipped around the terminal and pulled some switches down, changing the indicator lights from red to blue. The tractor beam holding the Millennium Falcon had been shut down — the escape route was free.

Two troopers came in and began searching the area. Obi-Wan hid behind the terminal and waited for them to leave. Then he slipped through the shadows back into the corridors.

As the old Jedi crept through the halls, he felt the presence of his old apprentice grow clearer, stronger — nearer. Briefly, he shut his eyes, allowing the Force to fill him completely. He knew the time was at hand — the Force told him that the result of this confrontation would not be one he would favour.

He turned a corner, and there he was — standing tall and ominous at the end of the corridor. Darth Vader.

Obi-Wan stepped forward from the shadows.

It was time to face him.

## Chapter Six

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**A/N:** Wow! So many lovely reviews! This chapter should answer most people's questions. It's duel time!

**pokey:** Thanks!

**eridani:** Thanks — it took me a little while to get it right, and I'm glad you like it!

**Hopeless4life:** Thank you! Soon enough for you? lol.

**TriGemini:** Do you know, you probably are the best at capturing exactly what happened in each chapters and what will happen later? It freaks me out a little! But your comments about Padmé telling Luke and Leia that they are twins should be answered in this chapter. Thank you for your review!

**Jedi Knight Emerald Tyrande:** Thank you! I'm glad you like it!

**Stephanie C:** Yeah, I was considering writing the weird monster dragging Luke under, but I figured that Padmé had been having a bad enough day ;). And this chapter will answer your question!

**Periain:** Thank you! I haven't actually read that one yet, although I have been meaning to — I know it's good, I've read the first chapter or so. I've just been too busy to finish it! I'm glad you think my fic is good!

**Emily:** Thank you! And your question will be answered :)

**Chou hime:** Thanks! I'm glad it's a good way.

**akidura:** Thank you for your lovely review. You'll have to wait and see what happens :)

**doreenthatsot:** Glad you like it :)

**Miss.S.P.:** Yeah, Artoo and Threepio are definitely R2-D2 and C3PO, but in most of the books I read, whenever someone's talking to/about them, they usually have Artoo and Threepio written down. I just decided to do it that way :)

**Laura-chan:** Yes, it is now duel-time! Although I'm not particularly good at writing battle sequences... anyway, hope you like it!

**Snow Leopard:** Thank you, and here's the next chapter for you :)

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## Chapter Six

The red blade hummed quietly in Vader's black-gloved hands. Fitting colours for a Sith Lord — the colour of blood and the absence of light.

"I've been waiting for you, Obi-Wan." Vader's voice sliced through his mask. "We meet again, at last. The circle is now complete."

Obi-Wan ignited his own saber, its blue glow illuminating his face. The familiar song of the weapon, though quiet, filled the Jedi's ears. He had not heard the hum of his blade in years.

He took an offensive stance, and the Dark Lord took the defensive.

"When I left you, I was but the learner; now I am the master," Vader said confidently.

“Only a master of evil, Darth,” Obi-Wan replied, his tone saddened rather than angry.

They faced each other, motionless, seeming to wait for an opportunity. Suddenly, Obi-Wan lunged and drove his lightsaber forward — but Vader was there, blocking his attack like a bolt of lightning. He answered with a counterslash that Obi-Wan parried as speedily as he had done.

“Your powers are weak, old man,” Vader noted tauntingly.

Obi-Wan’s reply was a faint smile and another parry, moving around the Sith in fluid movements. They fought on, trading blow for blow. They began to back toward the docking bay, and Obi-Wan saw that their conflict was attracting the attention of the stormtroopers guarding the Millennium Falcon. He felt in the Force the presence of the Skywalker twins nearby — they could escape to the ship in the midst of the distraction.

Vader used Obi-Wan’s momentary lapse in concentration to his advantage, swinging his blade over and down, but the Jedi blocked the slash and twisted elegantly around. Their sabers were locked together, pushing against one another with mighty strength.

Suddenly, an image filled Obi-Wan’s mind — the image of nine-year-old Anakin Skywalker, by his side in new Jedi robes. He firmly pushed the picture away, but another one of teenage Anakin laughing at a prank he had pulled on his master took its place. Other images of a younger Anakin flashed before Obi-Wan’s mind’s eye, reminding him of the bond they had shared as Master and Padawan, as friends, and as brothers.

Obi-Wan gazed on the black mask of Vader almost pityingly — his young friend had been twisted and broken into this new dark form. He understood what the Force was telling him — there was still good residing somewhere in the murky recesses of evil in Darth Vader. He could not kill him, not when there was still hope.

Other pictures swam in his head, pictures of youngpeople holding lightsabers, listening to Luke and Obi-Wan intently as they taught about the ways of the Force. And another realisation came to him — he was not to die. He was to live on and wait — to die here, to Vader’s blade, was not the fate he had been waiting for. Many other threads branched out from this one, other threads of other futures.

He knew that neither he nor Vader would perish in this conflict — though how he would escape, he did not know, as the troopers were rapidly closing in. He hazarded a glance at the Falcon, and to his relief saw Han, Chewbacca, Threepio, Artoo, Luke and Leia almost at the ramp. And there, standing motionless and staring at the battle was Padmé.

“Obi-Wan!” she cried out. “Obi-Wan, quickly, get away!”

At the sound of her voice, Vader looked around, trying to locate her. Obi-Wan stole that moment and darted off, easily deflecting the stormtroopers’ shots as he ran.

“Go!” he shouted to the group of Rebels as he rushed to the ship. Padmé was still staring at the stunned Vader, but Leia grabbed her hand and pulled her up the ramp into the Falcon, and Obi-Wan followed seconds later. Within moments, Han and Chewbacca had the freighter in the air.

Obi-Wan, Padmé, Luke and Leia sat in the central hold area, each lost in their own ruminations. Suddenly, Han came tearing in.

“Come on, buddy, we’re not out of this yet!” he addressed Luke.

The boy got up and followed to the gunports, and Leia moved to the cockpit, leaving Obi-Wan, Padmé and the droids in the holding area.

Padmé turned to the old Jedi, her eyes hollow. “Why didn’t you tell me?” she asked him quietly.

Obi-Wan sighed faintly. There was no need to ask what she meant. “For the same reason we separated the twins.”

“To protect us?”

He nodded. “As long as you did not know, there was less of chance of you searching for him and him finding you. We did not discover his identity until after the twins had been separated — and we found that he did not know you were alive.”

“I wouldn’t have gone to find him, Obi-Wan,” she said firmly, still vaguely upset.

“Wouldn’t you?” Obi-Wan gave her a piercing look. “You believed there was still good in him. If you had known he was alive, you would have tried to draw it out.”

Padmé looked down at her hands, defeated. She knew he was right. She couldn’t deny that.

Presently, she raised her head and asked, “Does Luke know about me?”

“Beru and Owen told him that his mother had been called away to a distant planet and had not returned,” Obi-Wan answered readily, staring into the distance.

Padmé gave an ironic smile. “That’s not far from the truth.” The smile faded. “Is he angry?”

Obi-Wan looked up at her. “Hmm? Oh, no. To tell you the truth, he was more interested in learning about his father than his mother.”

“Would it — would it be all right if I told him?”

He glanced at her sharply. “Only about you. It is not time yet to reveal the identity of his father.”

“Of course.” She stood up. ‘I don’t think I’d be able to handle telling him,’ she murmured as she began to move to the cockpit. Just before she left the hold area, she paused and turned back. “Thank you, Obi-Wan, for looking after Luke. You are a good friend to me,” she said sincerely. Then she disappeared into the corridors.

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Leia was stalking down the corridor as her mother walked up. Catching her by the arm, Padmé asked, “Leia, what’s wrong?”

The look on the young woman’s face was that of exasperation. “Oh, it’s that insufferable captain. All he loves is money!”

Padmé hid a smile. Her daughter seemed to be much affected by the handsome Solo. “Try not to let him get to you,” she advised. “Can you wait in the hold area for me? I want to talk to you and Luke.”

“Why?” Leia asked curiously.

“You’ll find out soon enough,” Padmé replied simply. Leia shrugged and walked on, and Padmé moved to the cockpit.

Hearing the voices of her son and Han Solo inside, she paused outside the door.

“...I don’t know, do you think it’s possible for a Princess and a guy like me to...” Han was saying.

“No,” Luke cut him off sharply.

Padmé smiled and raised her eyebrows. From what she had just heard, there would be some interesting developments between her daughter and the captain. Suddenly, she frowned. Her son’s tone had been almost... jealous! She entered the cockpit hastily.

“Luke, could I talk to you for a few minutes?” she asked smoothly.

“Sure,” Luke answered, getting up and following her out of the cockpit.

Once they entered the hold area, Padmé gestured for Luke to sit next to Leia. She took a seat across from them. In the corner, Obi-Wan and the droids watched the proceedings silently.

“Luke,” Padmé began, drawing in a deep breath. “We have not been formally introduced, but I’m sure you know by now that I am Leia’s mother.”

Luke nodded, puzzled, and Leia gazed at her mother inquisitively.

“What do you know of your mother?” the older woman asked Luke.

The young man knitted his brow in confusion. “Only that she was called away somewhere and never returned. Why? Did you know her?” His tone turned to one of eagerness.

Padmé smiled, almost imperceptibly. “Yes,” Shesighed. ‘There is something I must tell you both.’ Her eyes took on a distant, faraway look as she reminisced. “When I had Leia, I didn’t just give birth to her. I gave birth to twins — two beautiful, healthy babies who saved me from dying. I had almost lost the will to live, you see, but when Obi-Wan placed my children in my arms, I found renewed strength.” She smiled sadly at the memory and continued. “Shortly after that, we had to separate the twins to keep them safe from the Emperor. Their father had been a strong and powerful Jedi Knight, and the Emperor wished — and still wishes — to eradicate all the Jedi in the galaxy.”

At this, Luke sat up straighter and stared at the woman with wide eyes. Padmé showed no signs of noticing, and kept talking.

“One baby — you, Leia — was sent to live with me on the planet of Alderaan, a system ruled by my friend Bail Organa and his wife. The other — a boy — was sent to live on Tatooine with his aunt and uncle, under the watchful eyes of my good friend Obi-Wan Kenobi.”

“You mean —” Luke started, completely stunned. Leia was speechless.

Slowly, Padmé nodded. “Yes,” she answered. She turned to Luke. “Luke, you are Leia’s twin brother — and you are my son.”

“Your son?” Luke said wonderingly, looking a little shell-shocked. “You’re my mother?”

She nodded and her gaze travelled to Leia. The young woman was staring at Luke.

“I have a twin!” she exclaimed. “You’re my brother! I knew there was a reason for that... that *bond* I felt.” She hugged him, and Luke hugged her back, surprise and amazement written all over his face. Relief flooded Padmé’s body — she had been worried about Leia’s reaction, worried that her daughter would be angry with her for keeping the truth from her for all those years.

Luke broke away from his sister and turned back to Padmé. *My mother*, he thought, half-dazedly.

“If you’re my mother, how come I never heard anything about you?” he asked. The question was not accusatory or angry, simply curious.

Padmé’s smile was sad. “What your aunt and uncle told you was the truth, in a way. I was called to Alderaan, but this was because I had to protect both of you from the Emperor. I wanted to contact you, believe me, I did, but I couldn’t. It was too dangerous — the Emperor could have intercepted messages and come to take you — and us — away.” She remembered those times — the yearning to see her son, to know how he was growing up, to hear him talk. She had not been there to hear his first words or see his first steps — that joy had been stolen from her because of the Empire. Stolen from her by the Emperor — and his apprentice.

She reached out tentatively, and her son moved into her embrace. She hugged him tightly — the first time she had held her Luke since he had been a day old. Turning, she hugged Leia, and then sat back to look upon her two children.

At last, she had been reunited with her son — and now she and the twins were together.

## Chapter Seven

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**A/N:** My word! I got home last night to so many lovely reviews! Thank you so much for your support. This update is a little later than I wanted, but for the next couple of weeks, all of them will be — I've got all my exams. Sorry!

**pokey:** Yep, I couldn't stand killing him. Even if it was for the 'greater good'. Lol. Thanks for your review!

**Hopeless4life:** Thank you! Here's the next chapter for you :)

**eridani:** Thanks for reviewing even though you were in a hurry! I thought Padmé should have a hand in the battle :)

**TriGemini:** I was just blown away by your review! Thank you so much, it really made my day. You'll have to wait and see how it all turns out :)

**Emily:** Well, I can't tell you when Vader is reunited with his family, because that would give it away, lol. Don't worry, the confrontation will come!

**tensixtythree:** Thank you for your review — Vader will be added to the family soon...

**LaPapillion:** Thank you — I'd the Vader-Obi-Wan duel would come across that way.

**Laura-chan:** You won't have long to wait!

**Snow Lepord:** Lol, well, sort of. I mean, they are still in the midst of war, so it won't all be fun and happy memories :)

**Stephanie C:** Glad you like it! And I'm glad it made you happy :)

**Risi:** Wow! Your review was so enthusiastic! Glad you like the story. And you're welcome :)

**akidura:** Well, I have no idea what is going on in Vader's mind, since I'm not Vader, lol. Thank you for the review, and I'm glad you liked the reunion!

**doreenthatshot:** Thank you! I shall :)

**PrincessSkywalkerOrgana:** Thank you, and here's the next update!

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## Chapter Seven

Commander Willard rushed forward and scooped Leia up in a big hug, and then embraced Padmé.

"You're safe!" he exclaimed. "We had feared the worst." He regained his composure and stepped back, bowing formally. "When we heard about Alderaan, we were afraid that you were... lost along with the rest of the population."

"We don't have time for our sorrows, commander," Leia said, obviously not seeking to remember the pain. "The battle station has surely tracked us here." She looked pointedly at Han, who replied with a shrug as if to say, "Who, me?" "It's the only explanation for the ease of our escape. You must use the information in this R2 unit to plan the attack. It is our only hope."

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“Orbiting the planet at maximum velocity. The moon with the Rebel base will be in range in thirty minutes.”

Vader stared at the screen displaying the Death Star’s position in relation to Yavin’s fourth moon. In thirty minutes, the Rebels would be destroyed — along with his former mentor. And his daughter and his wife.

He wished desperately for another way — a way that would spare his beloved Padmé and their daughter. Yet even as he prayed for an alternative, he knew that there wasn’t one. And how could he relinquish an opportunity to destroy the Rebellion once and for all? He had a duty to the Emperor and the Empire.

“This will be a day long remembered,” he muttered. Not only as the final triumph of the Empire, but as the end of the Jedi — and the Skywalkers.

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“All flight troops, man your stations... all flight troops, man your stations...”

Han ignored the announcement and the flight crews rushing around him as he and Chewbacca loaded small boxes onto an armoured landspeeder.

He glanced up as Luke approached with C-3PO and R2-D2. The boy watched sadly for a while.

“So... you got your reward and you’re just leaving then?” Luke said finally.

“That’s right, yeah,” Han answered gruffly. ‘I got some old debts I’ve got to pay off with this stuff. Even if I didn’t, you don’t think I’d be fool enough to stick around here, do you?’ He eyed Luke thoughtfully. “Why don’t you come with us? You’re pretty good in a fight. I could use you.”

These words only served to anger Luke. “Come on! Why don’t you take a look around? You know what’s about to happen, what they’re up against. They could use a good pilot like you. You’re turning your back on them.” Han was a good friend, but he never seemed to care about much other than himself.

“What good’s a reward if you ain’t around to use it?” Han returned, affirming Luke’s thought. “Besides, attacking that battle station ain’t my idea of courage. It’s more like suicide.”

“All right. Well, take care of yourself, Han,” Luke said quietly, turning to go. “Guess that’s what you’re best at, isn’t it?” He began to move off into the depths of the hangar.

Han stared after him, then hesitated and called, “Hey Luke — may the Force be with you!”

Luke turned back to see the smuggler wink. He lifted a hand in a small wave, then walked off.

Han turned back to the boxes, and Chewbacca growled.

“What’re you looking at?” Han said. “I know what I’m doing.”

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Leia and Padmé stood by Luke's ship as the boy approached. Leia frowned when she saw the expression on her brother's face — a mixture of sadness and irritation.

"What's wrong?" she asked when he reached them.

Luke sighed. "Oh, it's Han! I don't know, I really thought he'd change his mind."

"He's got to follow his own path. No one can choose it for him," Leia said wisely, though she too looked sad.

Padmé turned her head, trying to keep tears from forming in her eyes. Her daughter's words reminded her of Anakin's choice — and in the current situation, she did not want to be reminded of him. The success of this mission would mean the probable death of the man who had once been her husband.

She felt a hand on her arm and looked up.

"Are you all right... Mother?" Luke asked, adding the final word somewhat hesitantly. And yet the word seemed so natural and right issued from his lips.

Padmé smiled at him. She had waited twenty years to hear him say that. "Yes, I'll be fine." Her smile faded and concern filled her gracefully ageing features. "Be careful, Luke. I've only just found you again."

"I'll be all right. Obi-Wan said my father was an excellent pilot — and I've got his blood in my veins," Luke assured his mother.

Padmé forced a smile. *I hope the same darkness is not in you, Luke.*

Leia gave her brother a quick hug, and then took her mother's arm and walked off.

Obi-Wan emerged from the shadows of the hangar and strode over to Luke.

"The Force will be with you, Luke," he said.

Luke smiled. "Thanks, Obi-Wan."

"Remember, the Force is all around you. Use it." The old Jedi placed a hand on his shoulder and smiled. "You will do great things, Luke."

Luke put his hand on Obi-Wan's shoulder. "I'll try," he said, one corner of his mouth lifting.

Obi-Wan stepped back as Luke's old friend Biggs Darklighter appeared and grabbed the young man's arm.

After a while, the two friends separated and moved to their respective fighters. Soon the multiple fighters began to move and soared out of the hangar, into the depths of their waiting battlefield.

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Leia and Padmé sat before the display screen on which Yavin and its moons were shown. A large red dot, representing the Imperial battle station, moved steadily and relentlessly

toward the fourth moon. Several commanders and Obi-Wan stood behind the two, also watching the screen as tiny green flecks appeared around the fourth moon.

“Our ships are all away,” a Commander declared.

They watched as the green flecks representing the Rebel ships moved into position and began their assault on the Death Star. They were making good progress until...

“Squad leaders — attention; squad leaders — attention! We’ve picked up a new set of signals from the other side of the station. Enemy fighters coming your way.”

Tension was high in the war room as the Rebels watched the Imperial TIE fighters face off against the Rebel ships. Over the speakers, Padmé heard her son’s voice say, “I’m hit, but not bad.” Her whole body froze as she listened, her hand gripping Leia’s tightly. Leia squeezed her hand and shut her eyes — moments later, Luke’s voice sounded over the speaker.

“Thanks, Wedge,” he said, sounding relieved. Padmé expelled her breath in a short sigh and loosened her grip on her daughter’s hand.

The Gold team began their attack run, and moved to the trench as the Death Star returned their laserfire.

“Death Star will be in range in five minutes.”

*Five minutes...* Leia stared intently at the projected target screen, willing the Death Star to halt, willing the fighters to blow the damn thing up faster.

Suddenly, three TIE fighters came into view, diving in perfect formation. Obi-Wan felt a vague disturbance in the Force, and closed his eyes... *Vader is piloting one of those fighters...* He opened them again and focused on the screen.

“Vader is piloting,” he said quietly in Padmé’s ear. She paled.

The TIE fighters ruthlessly and precisely picked off the Gold group. The Red group began their run and raced off down the trenches.

“Target’s coming up!” Red Leader announced. “Just hold them off for a few seconds...”

The TIE fighters rapidly approached — precise shots hit Red Twelve and Red Ten, and the two fighters exploded in flames. Then — “It’s away!”

“It’s a hit!” Red Nine exclaimed.

“Negative,” Red Leader answered. “Negative. It didn’t go in, it just impacted on the surface.” The disappointment was bitter in his voice.

He did not have long to be disappointed. A TIE fighter aimed, and Red Leader was lost in flames.

Leia stood up abruptly and began to pace. With both leaders gone, their chances were slimmer.

“Biggs, Wedge, let’s close it up,” Luke’s voice rang out. “We’re going in. We’re going in full throttle.”

Slowly, the Imperial fighters began to move in. Wedge's fighter was hit lightly, and he pulled away, leaving Luke and Biggs streaking on. Luke looked into the computer targeter — but suddenly, he moved it away.

"Hurry up, Luke!" Biggs urged him. He moved in to cover for his friend, but Vader aimed. "Wait!" he cried — then his cockpit exploded into flames.

Luke's eyes began to water for his lost friend, but he pushed his grief aside. He had to concentrate, he had to make this shot... and slowly his determination rose. He stared into the targeting device and began lining up the cross-hair lines.

Obi-Wan closed his eyes and concentrated.

*Use the Force, Luke...*

Luke heard — and *felt* — Obi-Wan's counsel and he paused. He closed his eyes briefly and pressed a button on his control panel. The targeting device moved away.

"The Force is strong with this one!" Vader muttered to himself.

In the war room, a commander leaned forward in confusion. "His computer's off. Luke, you switched off your targeting computer. What's wrong?"

"Nothing," the young man answered. "I'm all right."

Padmé stared, and turned to Obi-Wan, brow furrowed. He simply gave her a small, reassuring smile and placed a hand on her shoulder. She turned back to the screen.

Laserfire rang out behind Luke's fighter — and engulfed Artoo.

"The Death Star has cleared the planet."

Suddenly, one of the TIE ships on the side burst into flame. Luke looked around, trying to locate the source of the saving shots. And then he heard a very familiar voice yelling out.

*Han!* he thought in delight. Behind him, the other wingman veered to the side, colliding with Vader's ship. The wingman crashed into the sidewall, and Vader's ship spun out of the trench, its wing damaged.

"You're all clear, kid," Han said over the headset. "Now let's blow this thing and go home!"

Luke looked up, a smile on his face. He concentrated, feeling the Force flow through and around him, and fired his laser torpedoes. They disappeared into the exhaust port.

The remaining Rebel ships and the Millennium Falcon peeled off and raced back to the base — and behind them, the Death Star exploded in an amazing supernova. It was the beautiful moment the Alliance had been waiting for.

"Great shot, kid!" Han exclaimed. "That was one in a million!"

As soon as they touched down in the Rebel hangar, they were swarmed by a cheering, celebrating throng. Padmé hurried to her son and embraced him in a tight hug. Leia ran up to him, crying, "Luke! Luke!" and he swept her up and spun her around. Then Han stepped up, and Luke grabbed his friend and slapped him on the back.

“I knew you’d come back! I just knew it!” he exclaimed.

Han gave him a cocky grin. “Well, I wasn’t gonna let you get all the credit and take all the reward.”

Leia, caught up in the moment, rushed forward and hugged the smuggler tightly. She stepped back, eyes shining. “Hey, I knew there was more to you than money.”

Over at Luke’s speeder, technicians removed a fried Artoo.

“Oh, my!” Threepio said at the sight of his friend. ‘Artoo! Can you hear me? Say something!’ To the technician, he said, “You can repair him, can’t you?”

“We’ll get started on him right away.”

“We must repair him! Sir, if any of my circuits or gears will help, I’ll gladly donate them.”

Laughing, Luke placed a hand on the droid’s shoulder. “He’ll be all right.”

He looked off to the side of the hangar, and there was Obi-Wan, standing away from the crowds. Luke lifted a hand and waved, flashing the old Jedi a grin. *Thank you.*

Obi-Wan smiled and nodded. *Well done, Luke. Well done.*

## Chapter Eight

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**A/N:** Thanks for your reviews. I must say though, my next few chapters may not be what you hope for or expect. There will be less of a Vader and Padmé focus, and more of a twin focus, if that makes sense. Hope you like!

**Hopeless4life:** Thanks! I do intend to, but who knows what will happen with exams and all.

**PrincessSkywalkerOrgana:** Thank you — I hoped the interaction would turn out well. Glad you like it!

**TriGemini:** Yes, the battle of Yavin is definitely an excellent part of ANH, and I hope I did it justice. I didn't really put too much about everyone else finding out about Luke and Leia being twins... I couldn't think of a way to fit it in. Hope you like this chapter!

**pokey:** Yeah, I felt that I gave Padmé the short end of the straw, so to speak, in this fic — she does go through an awful lot. Thanks for your review!

**Stephanie C:** Hehe, I couldn't agree more. Just wait and see ;)

**Chou hime:** Lol, thanks for your support :)

**eridani:** Well, my offer for clarification is that she was a little more concerned about her son than Vader at that moment in time, but your point is well seen (no Jar Jar reference was intended in that statement!). Thanks for your review!

**TorontoBatFan:** Thanks! I'm not really deviating a huge amount from the original storyline (not yet, anyway), so no, Leia won't be trained. Luke will, though!

**anakin:** Lol, I thought my chapters were long enough! Lol. A little more Padmé in this chapter, but soon the focus will shift to the twins. You'll see :)

**LaPapillion:** Thanks! Glad you liked it :)

**doreenthatsot:** Sure will :)

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## Chapter Eight

Padmé stood beside Leia on the dais, both clothed in formal white. She proudly watched Luke and Han make their way up the long aisle towards the dais as the massed ranks of the Alliance stood and watched. When they reached the dais, the two women stepped forward. Glancing to the side, Padmé saw Artoo, now repaired and gleaming, sidle up beside Threepio. She smiled, remembering the many times that little droid had saved her life and the Alliance. Her eyes returned to Luke. The news that the young man was her son — and Leia's brother — had spread widely throughout the Alliance, and the Rebels had accepted Luke as one of their own.

She took a medal and passed it to Leia, who stepped forward. Han bowed his head slightly and Leia placed the medal around his neck. He looked up at her, a little half-smile on his face, and winked. She lifted her eyebrows slightly and tried to suppress her own smile, but it shone through and Han grinned.

Padmé passed the second medal to Leia, and she placed it around her twin's neck. They smiled at each other for a second, and then she stepped back.

Her mother raised her arms in a signal to the crowd, and the chamber exploded in applause and cheers as the two men turned to face the Alliance.

There they stood, two unlikely heroes — one a farm boy from Tatooine, and the other a Corellian smuggler. But that day, they were the heroes of the Rebel Alliance.

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“Obi-Wan.”

Obi-Wan opened his eyes and saw Padmé walking towards him. She sat down beside him.

“He’s still alive, isn’t he?” she asked quietly, seeming to want confirmation of what she already knew was true.

He paused, and nodded slowly, knowing who she was referring to. “Yes. The danger is now on you.”

“I know.” She looked away and watched the celebrations. “I’m going to have to leave.”

Obi-Wan said nothing, just waited for her to continue.

“He will find me, no matter where I go, and I cannot put the Alliance in danger. Or my children.” She looked back at him, and her eyes were moist. “There was still good in him, Obi-Wan. I felt it.”

“Where will you go?” Obi-Wan asked gently, though he knew the answer.

“Naboo,” she replied. ‘I’ll stay at the lake retreat where we married.’ *Our wedding... such a perfect moment. How could it have led to this?* “I have to face him. Maybe... maybe there is still hope. Vader is still my husband — I might be able to bring him back.”

There was a noise behind them, and Padmé whirled around. “Luke?”

The young man stepped out of the shadows, and the expression on his face was one of shock. “Vader... Vader is your husband?”

Reluctantly, she nodded. She couldn’t lie to her son.

“So he’s my father?”

Another hesitant nod.

“But Obi-Wan, you said Vader betrayed and murdered my father!” Luke exclaimed bitterly.

Obi-Wan remained undefensive. “Your father, Anakin, was seduced by the Dark Side of the Force — he ceased to be Anakin Skywalker, and became Darth Vader. When that happened, he betrayed everything that Anakin Skywalker believed in. The good man who was your father was destroyed. So what I told you was true... from a certain point of view.”

“A certain point of view!” Luke rasped derisively. He slumped down into a chair.

“Luke, you’re going to find that many of the truths we cling to depend greatly on our point of view,” Obi-Wan said gently. Luke didn’t respond, and Padmé dropped her head in her hands. ‘I don’t blame you for being angry,’ Obi-Wan continued. ‘If I was wrong in what I did, it certainly wouldn’t have been for the first time. You see, what happened to your father was my fault.’”

Luke looked up with sudden interest. His anger was subsiding rapidly due to curiosity and the old Jedi’s compassion.

“When I first encountered your father, he was already a great pilot,” Obi-Wan went on. ‘But what amazed me was how strongly the Force was with him. I took it upon myself to train Anakin in the ways of the Jedi. My mistake was thinking I could be as good a teacher as my old master. I was not. Such was my foolish pride. The Emperor sensed Anakin’s power, and he lured him to the Dark Side.’ He paused and looked into Luke’s eyes, as if seeking for forgiveness. “My pride had terrible consequences.”

“It wasn’t your fault. It was mine,” Padmé mumbled. She lifted her head and gazed at the two. ‘He turned to the Dark Side because he thought it would save me. He had had visions of me dying in childbirth. He thought with new power — power the Emperor offered — he could save me.’ She gave a humourless chuckle, eyes hollow. “As it were, his turn almost killed me — if it weren’t for you and Leia, Luke, I would have died.”

Luke was entranced. If Darth Vader had done his actions from love, he had simply been misguided and seduced. There must yet be a spark of Anakin Skywalker in him. There must yet be a way to save him. “There is still good in him,” he said.

Padmé smiled faintly — her son believed the same idea she did.

But Obi-Wan shook his head. “I also thought he could be turned back to the good side. It couldn’t be done.”

“It can,” Padmé said, determinedly. “I know it can. He is not completely destroyed, Obi-Wan. There is still good in him — and that is why I have to face him.”

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“I’ve got to go,” Han told Leia. They were standing alone, a little way off from the ongoing celebrations.

She stared at him. “Why?”

“There’s a price on my head. If I don’t pay off Jabba the Hutt, I’m a walking dead man.” He grinned at the look on her face. “Don’t worry, Princess, I’ll be back. Your brother’ll look after you all right.”

“I thought you were going to stay,” Leia said. She felt strangely saddened at the thought of his departure.

“Yeah, well, I’ve got to get this price off my head while I still *have* a head,” Han replied. “Besides, you’re not gonna need me for a while.”

Leia understood. She knew it was not fair to make him stay when he was not a real member of the Alliance, and had his own business to attend to. But... “Yes we will. We still

need you.”

“We?” he asked. He had seen something in her eyes that seemed like she cared about him. Really cared.

“Yes.”

“What about *you*?” Han said, emphasising the last word. He didn’t know why he was pursuing the subject. Maybe it was because he cared about her... but that wasn’t it, was it?

“Me?” she said bluntly. “I don’t know what you mean.”

He smirked at her. “Yes, you probably do.”

“And what precisely *am* I supposed to know?” she asked, her voice rising slightly as she began to understand his hints.

The smile grew on his face. “You want me to stay because of the way you feel about me.”

She softened a little. “Well, yes, you’ve been a great help,” she said, pausing before adding, “...to us.”

Han cut her off. “No, Your Worship. That’s not it.”

Suddenly she understood. She began to laugh — somewhat nervously. “You’re imagining things.”

“Am I?” Han leaned closer and raised an eyebrow.

She turned away and pressed her lips together, trying to quell the smile threatening to break over her face. Why did she want to smile? It made no sense. *Control yourself, Leia*. When she turned back to him, her officious mask was back in place.

“Enjoy your trip, Captain,” she said, looking unruffled and calm.

He stepped back and gave her a cool, appraising glance. “We’ll meet again,” he said. “Maybe by then you’ll have warmed up a little.”

Then he turned and walked over to say goodbye to Luke, leaving Leia to stare after him.

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Padmé walked over to her daughter, who was watching Han Solo talk to Luke. Puzzled, she glanced at the captain, then back at her daughter.

“What’s happened?” she asked.

“Han’s leaving,” Leia replied shortly.

“Ah.” Padmé smiled knowingly.

Leia turned to her mother and knitted her eyebrows together. “What?”

“Oh, nothing,” Padmé said innocently. “You’re going to... miss him, aren’t you?”

Catching the meaning in her words, Leia laughed in astonishment. “Mother!”



Padmé smiled, but quickly sobered. “Leia, I have to leave. I’m going to Naboo.”

“Naboo? Why Naboo?”

“It is my true home planet.” She sighed. The time had come to tell her the truth. “Leia, there are many things about me you don’t know the truth about. I’m not an Organa — not by blood or marriage. I was born Padmé Naberrie Amidala. I was the Queen of Naboo many years ago, and then served as a Senator in the Old Republic.”

Leia stared. “Why... why are you telling me this now? Why didn’t you tell me before?”

“I’m in danger — and so are you and Luke,” Padmé said in answer to the question. “If I had told you before we would have been in more danger. Very soon Darth Vader is going to come after me.”

“Darth Vader?” The surprise in Leia’s eyes was replaced with worry and concern. “Why? Why you?”

“He thought I was dead — he knows now that I’m alive.” She closed her eyes briefly. “Leia... I told you your father was a Jedi named Anakin Skywalker, but I never told you that he turned to the Dark Side just before you were born. I thought he had died, but...” she trailed off. She looked up into her daughter’s eyes. “Leia, Vader is going to come after me because he is my husband.”

“He’s my father?” Leia whispered incredulously. Yet, somehow she knew it was true. A wave of crushing emotions swamped her and threatened to take over — anger, hurt, shock, fear. But she looked at her mother, and couldn’t bring herself to be angry at her for holding back this information — the expression on the older woman’s face was so remorseful and distraught that Leia wrapped her arms around her and squeezed her in a tight hug.

“I’ll go with you,” she said, sounding determined and angry.

Padmé stepped back and shook her head. “No, Leia. The Alliance needs you. I must face him alone.” Her melancholy expression slowly melted away and she smiled, her old strength and determination flowing back into her face. “I can take care of myself.”

Leia looked as if she would argue further, but she nodded hesitantly. “All right. Be careful, Mother.”

So many thoughts swirled through Padmé’s mind. The fact that she had to be careful of her own husband... the idea of seeing him and talking to him again... the memory of what he had done to the Republic, to the Jedi, to her... She had to be careful of the man whom she remembered as the Jedi who had kissed her so gently at their wedding, now a Sith who sought to destroy everything she fought for.

“I will.”

## Chapter Nine

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**A/N:** Here is the next chapter! A little more introspective. Hope you like :) I'm off to a Christian function with a Star Wars theme tomorrow night — my friend and I have a little duel planned. I'm looking forward to it! Anyway, personal life aside, please review this chapter! Reviews make me happy :)

**pokey:** Yeah, I agree — she's a risk-taker. Thanks for your review!

**eridani:** Thanks, I'm glad you think so :)

**Chou hime:** Well, the next few chapters won't really focus much on Padmé at all. Hope you'll still like them, though :)

**Hopeless4life:** Lol, I'll update as often as I can.

**TriGemini:** Nice to know I can surprise you! There'll be less Padmé and more Han and Leia in the next few chaps. Glad you're enjoying it!

**PrincessSkywalkerOrgana:** Thank you, I shall :)

**aquatmarine:** Thanks!

**Stephanie C:** Yes, I agree, it was rather sad. And yes, it does change future events. Wait and see ;)

**Speckled Bird:** Thanks for your review — and you'll have to wait and see whether or not the ending is happy. Happy reading!

**Laura-chan:** Oh, yes, Vader will find her. Soon or not, though — difficult to say. Lol. Never fear, I've already finished writing this whole story :)

**Miss.S.P.:** Thank you for your advice — I'll take that into consideration when I'm editing my chapters. This chapter has a little more character thoughts. Hope you like it!

**Snow Leopard:** No problem :) Will it work out well or badly? Just wait and see! hehe.

**Anna:** Thanks! Here's an update for ya :)

**akidura:** Glad you like the banter — I was hoping it would all be in-character! As for Obi-Wan, I'm not sure. I've re-read my chapters, and he doesn't do too much. I'll decide soon :)

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## Chapter Nine

In the entire galaxy, there was only one person whose very presence instilled fear in Darth Vader. The Galactic Emperor stirred in his apprentice a mixture of emotions — respect, fear... and now anger.

The Emperor had told him, all those years ago, that Vader had killed his wife in anger, and his child with her. But now he knew that she was alive, and his daughter too— and he was enraged that the Emperor had kept this information from him.

Now, as he waited for the transmission, Vader tried to subdue his boiling emotions. He tried to reason with himself. The Emperor may not have known she was still alive — and if he found out now, he may try to have her killed. Sith or not, Vader could not let that happen. Neither his wife or his daughter must be lost to him again.

A light began to play across his dark cloak, and he quickly dropped to one knee, bowing his head. A huge hologram of the Emperor materialised before him.

“What is thy bidding, my master?” Vader asked respectfully, quashing his inner turmoil so Palpatine would not sense it.

“There is a great disturbance in the Force,” the Emperor’s deep, sinister voice filled the room.

“I have felt it,” Vader agreed solemnly, rising.

“We have a new enemy — Luke Skywalker.”

*Skywalker? There is another! She had twins!* Vader worked hard to conceal his surprise and shock, for though he knew his mask covered his face, the Emperor could often sense his emotions through the Force. “Yes, my master,” he responded automatically. *Where is he? Where is my... son?*

“He could destroy us.”

*Which means we must destroy him...* Vader thought numbly. *It must be that pilot — the Force was strong in him... his presence seemed strange and familiar all at once.* “He’s just a boy...”

“The Force is strong with him,” the Emperor cut in. “The son of Skywalker must not become a Jedi.”

The younger Sith Lord’s mind raced as he tried to think of another way — any other way. He could not fail his family again... “If he could be turned, he would become a powerful ally.”

“Yes... yes...” the Emperor muttered, seeming pleased. “He would be a great asset. Can it be done?”

Vader simply said what he knew his master would expect to hear: “He will join us or die, my master.” He knelt down again as the hologram faded.

Slowly, Vader rose to his feet. How would he find his son? How could he turn him to the Dark Side?

*Padmé...*

Before he found his son, he had to find his wife. He would bring her back to him, turn her away from her foolish Rebellion — and then she would help him find their children. The twins. And they could bring them to the Dark Side together.

He would overthrow the Emperor, and he would finally be free — free to rule the galaxy with his family by his side. Together. As they should be.

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Luke powered down his lightsaber and removed his helmet as Obi-Wan switched off the training remote. He had just spent the last couple of hours being trained to fall into and use the Force — now he found it much easier.

"It's time," Obi-Wan said suddenly.

Luke replaced his lightsaber hilt in his belt. "Time for what?"

Obi-Wan's lips twitched faintly into a smile. "Time for you to meet Yoda."

"Yoda? Who's Yoda?" Luke asked curiously.

"Yoda is a Jedi master," Obi-Wan informed the young man. "He once instructed me, years ago."

"Where do I go?"

"He lives on Dagobah. You must go there to continue your training."

"Aren't you coming with me, Obi-Wan?" Luke asked. He was eager to complete his training and become a Jedi, but he wanted his friend and mentor there as well.

"I will meet you there later. You must meet Yoda first — alone."

Luke was puzzled, but he nodded nonetheless. "All right."

He moved off to find his sister, following her Force signature. Obi-Wan had taught him that every living being had an individual Force signature that could be sensed, and after a while, Luke had begun to feel these identifying signatures all around him. There was no presence he felt more strongly than that of his twin sister. Though they had known they were twins for only a week or two, already they were developing a deep bond.

Leia was sitting quietly at the front of the temple, obviously deep in thought. She didn't glance up when Luke walked up behind her — she had felt that it was him.

"What's wrong?" Luke asked her. The look on his sister's face was pensive, and she seemed a little... sad.

"Nothing. Nothing's wrong," Leia answered, keeping her eyes on Yavin, gleaming in the distant sky. "I was just... thinking."

"About what?"

Leia sighed. "How could he be my — *our* — father?" She turned to face her brother. "Mother used to tell me stories about her husband when I was a little girl... about how kind he was, how compassionate... stories about his heroic deeds as a Jedi Knight. How could a man so good turn into Darth Vader? Someone who could destroy a whole planet — and torture innocent people," she added in little above a whisper.

"I don't believe he has become completely evil," Luke said quietly. "I believe — I *know* — that there is still good in him. So does our mother."

She gazed at him silently for a while, almost sceptically — but then she backed down. She seemed to accept what he was telling her — not as the truth, but as a possibility.

"What is it that you want to tell me?" she asked, changing the subject. She didn't want to think any longer about her torture at the hands of her own father, or of Alderaan's destruction. Those thoughts only served to torment her.

Luke glanced at her. "I'm going to Dagobah to continue my Jedi training. I'm going to leave as soon as I can."

"Oh." Leia's voice was quiet, but understanding. "How long?"

Luke shrugged. "I don't know. However long it takes, I guess."

Leia gave a small smile. "It seems like everyone's flying off." The smile faded and her expression shifted. "Have you heard from Han?" she asked her twin. The young man shook his head. "He was due back here last week..." she murmured, half to herself.

"Well, it's Han," Luke said with a wry grin. "He probably got sidetracked."

There was a slight pause, and then Leia looked back at her brother, a smile on her face.

"You go on and do what you have to do," she told him. "We won't run across much trouble — the Empire is lying low for a while. Our victory has lessened their grip."

"All right," Luke replied. He was grateful for his sister's understanding — not that a lack of it would have stopped him, but it helped to have it. "If you hear any news about Han, you can reach me on my comlink."

Leia nodded. Suddenly, she reached out and gave him a quick hug.

"May the Force be with you," she said.

He squeezed her shoulder, and then got up and disappeared into the hangar.

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"Commander Willard!" Leia called as she entered the command centre. "Has there been any communication from Captain Solo?"

The commander shook his head. "I'm afraid not, Your Highness."

Leia's spirits seemed to droop a little. "Thank you, commander," she said with a small forced smile. She walked out of the command centre and made her way to her own quarters.

Once inside, she sank down in a chair and propped her chin on her hand.

Why did it bother her this much that Han had not returned?

*He's a valuable member of the Alliance, she reasoned. We need him here.*

The words he had spoken when he had left rang in her mind.

"What about you?"

*What **about** me?* she asked the empty air silently in frustration. *Captain Solo is nothing more to me than a valued colleague. It doesn't matter what I think. There is no point or need to be anxious about him — he can take care of himself, as he has shown on many occasions. He only cares about himself.*

Yet was that really true? She remembered the way he had winked at her at the medal ceremony, the way he had looked at her after they had destroyed the Death Star, and his last

words to her before he left. She couldn't deny that there was something there. After all, why would he care whether she had 'warmed up' or not?

A slow smile spread over Leia's face as she pictured Han's smirk.

*"You want me to stay because of the way you feel about me."*

She sighed and dropped her forehead to her palm. He was right. She did feel something for him — she wouldn't even be thinking these blasted thoughts if she felt nothing for him.

She pushed these new (were they really new?) thoughts aside. Something was wrong — no matter what Han was like, no matter how sidetracked he usually got, she could feel that something was not right.

She stood and left the room abruptly, leaving her swirling emotional thoughts behind. She would find Han first — and then she would decide what to do about him.

## Chapter Ten

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**A/N:** The next few chapters are going to be more focused on Luke and Leia — All you really need to know about Vader is that he's looking for Padmé, and all you need to know about Padmé is that she's at Naboo. This particular chapter is Luke-centred, and very (VERY!) similar to the movie, but bear with me! More new action coming in a few chapters, and since I'm on holidays, I'll post a little more often (and because these chapters aren't particularly spectacular, lol).

**Chou hime:** Lol, your enthusiasm is infectious. Thanks for the review! More Luke and Leia in the next few chapters.

**Laura-chan:** Well, you'll have to wait a bit for another Vader/Padmé confrontation!

**akidura:** There will be some Leia/Han developments :)

**Hopeless4life:** Surely will :)

**TriGemini:** Thank you so much for your review! Don't think Leia will be quite so enthusiastic as Luke and Padmé about turning Vader, but you'll have to wait and see :)

**pokey:** Glad you like the changes! Here's the next chapter — hope you like!

**Stephanie C:** No, sorry, she won't :( I didn't think of that until after I'd finished writing the whole story! Hope you like it anyway :)

**lala:** Thanks for the review! No, Anakin isn't scarred — well, not his face. He only wears the helmet because he doesn't want to see his face (which is still as gorgeous as ever! lol).

**Snow Lepord:** Yes, I think Leia is the master of denial! New chapter coming your way now :)

**doreenthatsnot:** Thanks! I shall.

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## Chapter Ten

Luke gazed gloomily at his X-wing fighter, which was now half-submerged in the swamp of Dagobah. Artoo whistled at him, and snapping out of his reverie, he grabbed an equipment box from the shore and pulled it to a nearby clearing. He lit a small fusion furnace, and plugged a power cable into Artoo's socket.

"Ready for some power?" he asked the droid. "Okay. Let's see now. Put that in there. There you go."

Artoo whistled in appreciation as Luke opened a container of food and sat down to eat.

He sighed. "Now all I have to do is find this Yoda." He glanced around at the jungle, which seemed foreboding in the darkness. He could sense something...

"There's something familiar about this place. I feel like... I don't know..."

"Feel like what?"

Luke grabbed his lightsaber and whirled around. The strange creature who had spoken was a short, greenish thing, not even a metre tall. It was dressed in ragged clothing, and seemed to

be quite old.

“Like we’re being watched!” Luke finished, eyeing the creature cautiously.

“Away with your weapon! I mean you no harm!” the creature cried, holding its arms up in defence.

The young man hesitated for a few seconds, but put his lightsaber away.

“I am wondering, why are you here?” the creature asked.

“I’m looking for someone,” Luke said, trying not to volunteer much information.

“Looking? Found someone, you have, I would say, hmmm?” It gave a funny little laugh.

Luke tried to keep from smiling. “Right.”

“Help you I can. Yes, mmm.”

“I don’t think so,” Luke replied. “I’m looking for a great warrior.”

“Ahhh! A great warrior.” The creature laughed and shook his head. “Wars not make one great.”

Luke furrowed his brow as it moved over to the cases of supplies with the aid of a walking stick. *What an oddly wise thing to say, coming from this little old thing*, he thought. The creature began rummaging through the cases — and then Luke’s container of food caught its eye. It hobbled over, picked the container up and took a bite of food.

“Put that down. Hey! That’s my dinner!” Luke protested.

The creature spat out its mouthful and made a face. “How get you so big, eating food of this kind?” it asked, flipping the food container in Luke’s direction. It began rummaging through another of the cases.

Luke was beginning to lose his patience. “Listen, friend, we didn’t mean to land in that puddle, and if we could get our ship out, we would, but we can’t, so why don’t you just...”

“Aww, cannot get your ship out?” the creature said almost teasingly. He spotted something in Luke’s case, and Luke tried to grab the case away.

“Hey, you could have broken this,” Luke said, getting exasperated. The creature kept rummaging, tossing things aside. ‘Don’t do that. You’re making a mess.’ The creature suddenly grabbed a power lamp and examined it in delight. “Hey, give me that!”

The creature retreated with its prize. “Mine!” it exclaimed. “Or I will help you not.”

Slowly, it backed away from Luke, moving towards Artoo. The droid’s arm slowly began to move unnoticed towards the power lamp.

“I don’t want your help. I want my lamp back,” Luke responded impatiently. “I’ll need it to get out of this slimy mudhole.”

“Mudhole? Slimy? My home this is.”

Artoo suddenly grabbed hold of the lamp, and the two diminutive figures immediately engaged in a tug-of-war.



“Mine! Mine!” the creature cried.

“Oh, Artoo, let him have it,” Luke sighed.

The creature continued to shout “Mine!” over and over again. Suddenly, it grabbed its walking stick and began to beat Artoo with it, the clunking noise echoing slightly in the swamp.

“Artoo!” Luke said.

The droid finally let go with a little squeal.

Luke was quite fed up now. “Now will you move along, little fella? We’ve got a lot of work to do.”

“No, no, no! Stay and help you, I will,” the creature insisted. “Find your friend, hmm?”

“I’m not looking for a friend. I’m looking for a Jedi Master.”

The creature’s eyes opened wider. “Ohhh. Jedi Master. Yoda. You seek Yoda!”

“You know him?” Luke asked in surprise.

“Mmm,” the visitor nodded. “Take you to him, I will. Yes, yes. But now, we must eat. Come. Good food. Come.”

The creature scurried off, laughing merrily. Luke stared after him, hesitating... but something told him to follow the little visitor. And Obi-Wan had been telling him to trust his feelings...

“Come, come,” the creature’s voice called.

Artoo whistled his protest.

“Stay here and watch after the camp, Artoo,” Luke told him. Ignoring the droid’s beeping, Luke ventured into the jungle after the little creature.

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Obi-Wan stepped down out of his small, one-man fighter and began to walk into the depths of the swampy jungle. He reached a clearing and there was Artoo, sitting quietly with many supply cases. Obi-Wan glanced across the swamp and raised his eyebrows in faint amusement when he saw Luke’s X-wing half-submerged in the water.

He moved on silently to a tiny dwelling and paused in the doorway.

“How far away is Yoda?” he heard Luke say. “Will it take us long to get there?”

“Not far. Yoda not far. Patience. Soon you will be with him,” came the reply. Obi-Wan saw the little creature taste some food from a small pot. “Rootleaf, I cook. Why wish you become a Jedi? Hm?”

“Mostly because of my father, I guess,” Luke answered.

“Ah, your father. Powerful Jedi was he, powerful Jedi, mmm.”

Luke was visibly getting fed up. "Oh, come on. How could you know my father?" *Well, I guess everyone knows my father... but how would you know that he was my father? Nobody knows.* "You don't even know who I am. Oh, I don't even know what I'm doing here. We're wasting our time."

The creature sighed and turned away, facing the door. "I cannot teach him," he said to Obi-Wan. "The boy has no patience."

"He will learn patience," Obi-Wan responded as he entered the little hut. He glanced in some amusement at Luke, who was wide-eyed and shocked as it dawned on him that the short creature was none other than Jedi Master Yoda himself.

"Hmmm. Much anger in him, like his father," Yoda said.

Obi-Wan's mouth quirked in a half-smile. "Was I any different when you taught me?" he asked.

"Ha. He is not ready," Yoda muttered, still reluctant.

"Yoda! I am ready," Luke put in eagerly. "I... Obi-Wan! I can be a Jedi. Obi-Wan, tell him I'm ready!"

Yoda spun around and turned to Luke. "Ready, are you? What know you of ready?" He shook his head slightly. 'For eight hundred years have I trained Jedi. My own counsel I will keep on who is to be trained! A Jedi must have the deepest commitment, the most serious mind.' To Obi-Wan he said, indicating Luke, "This one long time have I watched. Never his mind on where he was. Hmm? What he was doing. Adventure! Heh! Excitement! Heh! A Jedi craves not these things." He turned back to the young man. "You are reckless!"

Luke looked down at his feet. He knew that what Yoda was saying was true.

"So was I, if you'll remember," Obi-Wan said gently.

"He is far too old. Yes, too old to begin the training," Yoda replied, but Luke thought he could detect a subtle softening in the Jedi Master's voice.

"But I've learned so much," Luke entreated.

Yoda turned his gaze on the young man and considered him carefully. After a long moment, the Jedi Master turned back to Obi-Wan with a small sigh. "Will he finish what he begins?"

"I won't fail you," Luke promised eagerly.

Obi-Wan turned his own unflinching gaze on Luke, and touched the Force.

*"I won't fail you."*

His heart was true, and his resolve was steady. He held no fear. No, Luke would not fail them, as Obi-Wan had failed his Padawan. This young man would grow up to be a true Jedi.

## Chapter Eleven

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**A/N:** Thanks for all of the reviews! They're all very encouraging, so do write more! Here's another Luke-focused chapter, and Leia makes a cameo, lol.

**TriGemini:** Yes, I've always thought that Yoda was testing Luke. As for whether or not Luke is able to keep his promise... you'll have to read and see ;) Thank you so much for your review!

**pokey:** I totally agree.

**Chou hime:** Yes, I agree, Yoda can be rather... odd, lol. He's brilliant. Thanks for reviewing, even when you were in a rush!

**Laura-chan:** Sorry, but you will have to wait for a while! There's quite a lot of events before the confrontation. Glad you liked Luke meeting Yoda!

**Princess-Aiel:** Thank you very much, and I shall :)

**Miss.S.P.:** I certainly hope so! Thanks for reviewing!

**Stephanie C:** Lol, glad you liked it. And yes, they are.

**0AnakinSolo0:** Thank you very much! I'm glad you enjoy this story. Essentially, Anakin could function without the suit, but he has a lot of burn scars on his body. His artificial legs are like Luke's artificial hand in the OT — same appearance as normal flesh. His lungs and organs and such are still very much functional, and yes he can still "make love", although that doesn't have anything to do with this story, lol.

**Danielle:** Haha, no worries, reviews at any time make me happy :) You have awesome ideas! I don't know if I can fit them in (since I've written this whole story already), but I really do love those ideas. We'll see :)

**DarthGladiator45:** Thank you! I shall.

**Emerald Green Queen:** Thank you so much for reviewing! I can't believe you recognise Arliddian. Nobody I know does, so that made me smile! Yes, Episode 5 is about 3 years after Episode 4, but I felt that for the purposes of my writing (and the fact that writing "three years later" bugs me!), I'd keep it within the same timeframe. Thanks for reading, and I'm glad you're finding it interesting!

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## Chapter Eleven

With Yoda strapped to his back, Luke climbed up a thick vine. Panting heavily, he continued on his course, climbing and flipping through the air, jumping over roots and racing around under Yoda's guidance.

"Run! Yes," Yoda encouraged him. "A Jedi's strength flows from the Force. But beware of the Dark Side. Anger... fear... aggression. The Dark Side of the Force are they. Easily they flow, quick to join you in a fight. If once you start down the dark path, forever will it dominate your destiny. Consume you it will, as it did Obi-Wan's apprentice."

*Father...* Luke thought as they approached a clearing. Aloud, he asked, "Is the Dark Side stronger?"

“No... no... no. Quicker, easier, more seductive,” Yoda answered.

“But how am I to know the good side from the bad?”

Obi-Wan walked up and sat down on a large root as Luke let Yoda down to the ground. “You will know, when you are calm, at peace. Passive,” he said. “A Jedi does not use the Force for attack, but for knowledge and defence. The Force is not a weapon or a tool.”

He watched silently as the young man looked around at a huge, dead, black tree. Its giant, twisted roots formed a dark and sinister cave on one side.

“Something’s not right here...” Luke murmured, staring at the tree. “I feel cold, death...”

Yoda sat down beside Obi-Wan. “That place... is strong with the Dark Side of the Force. A domain of evil it is. In you must go.”

“What’s in there?” Luke asked.

“Only what you take with you,” Obi-Wan answered him.

Luke looked warily from the two Jedi to the tree. He began to strap on his weapon belt.

“Your weapons — you will not need them,” Yoda told him.

He hesitated, but nodded. He left his weapon belt behind and entered the cave.

It was dark — Luke could barely see much more than a few centimetres in front of him. The air was musty, and the sense of danger and evil radiating off the cave was almost palpable. His eyesight useless, Luke recalled Yoda and Obi-Wan’s teachings and leaned into the Force to guide his stumbling, faltering steps. He pressed on deeper, ignoring the scurrying footsteps of lizards and small creatures he heard, focusing only on moving forward and meeting whatever terror awaited him.

The presence of evil grew stronger, almost overwhelming the young man. Increasingly apprehensive, he cautiously stepped forward — and then he saw him.

Darth Vader emerged from the darkness, his black figure dimly illuminated by his ignited red lightsaber. He was silent as he slowly advanced on Luke.

Luke stopped absolutely still. This was no mere enemy — the man standing before him was his father. And he was approaching and raising his weapon to strike.

Yet Luke knew that, even if he had his lightsaber with him, he could not fight Vader. He could not defend against or attack this man when he knew he was his father.

*A Jedi uses the Force for knowledge and defence, never for attack...* Yoda’s lesson reverberated in his head.

Slowly, he backed away. His back hit the wall of the cave — he was pinned.

Vader raised his lightsaber over his head, ready to deliver the blow. Luke leaned further into the Force and squeezed his eyes shut.

*I will not fight you, Father,* he cried desperately in his mind. He waited for the attack — but none came.

He opened his eyes — Vader had disappeared. In his place was a man, one whom Luke had never seen before... and yet he seemed familiar. The man was wrapped in shadows, the expression on his face one of wonder and relief, and even as Luke watched, the darkness swirling around him siphoned off slowly, disappearing into the back of the cave. Then, as suddenly as he had appeared, the man vanished. Luke was left alone in the darkness of the cave, feeling almost more confused than when he had ventured in.

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Luke stood on his hands, with Yoda perched atop his feet. Concentrating, the young man stared at some large rocks across from them. Using the Force, he lifted one of the rocks from the ground and floated it to rest on another.

“Use the Force. Yes...” Yoda instructed. He tapped Luke’s leg. The young man slowly lifted one hand from the ground. Suddenly, something began to beep. Ignoring the sound, Luke continued to concentrate.

“Now... the stone. Feel it,” came Obi-Wan’s calm voice.

Luke focused his mind and lifted the top rock. Gently he placed it on the ground.

“Good,” Yoda said. He tapped Luke’s leg again and then jumped down. Luke lowered his arm and then his legs, standing upright. He looked around in the direction of the incessant beeping. It was his comlink.

He grabbed it off the ground and switched it on.

“Luke,” Leia’s voice greeted him. “I have... found Han.”

“Oh, good,” Luke replied. “Where is he?”

“No, it’s not good. He’s being held captive in Jabba the Hutt’s palace.”

This was certainly not good news. Luke knew all about the ruthlessness of the Hutts, and Jabba was a particularly nasty one. “Where are you now?” he asked his sister.

“I’m on Tatooine with Threepio,” she answered. “We found Chewbacca with the Millennium Falcon beyond the outskirts of Mos Eisley. We’ll need your help.”

“Well... I don’t know how much longer I need to stay here. I’ll join you as soon as I can. Don’t do anything until I get there — we need to think of a plan together.”

Leia paused. “All right,” she agreed. “Let me know when you leave.”

“I will,” Luke said, and he turned off the comlink. He turned to Yoda and Obi-Wan, who were watching him impassively.

“I will finish my training first,” he declared. “And then I will use my skills to help my friends.”

Obi-Wan gave a small smile. “Very well,” was all he said. In reality, however, he was immensely proud of Luke. He had shown he was committed to following the path of the Jedi, even though his friend was most probably in danger. He had learned so much in these past weeks, and now he was applying it.

Yoda nodded and shuffled over to the young man. “Up,” he commanded, and then Luke was back on his hands.

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Luke had spent yet another four days training with Yoda and Obi-Wan, honing his skills. He had learned to levitate multiple items by focusing the Force, and his connection to the Force now was strong.

Then, just after a training exercise, his X-wing had sunk below the lake’s surface.

Luke gazed at the lake gloomily. “How am I going to get it out now?” he wondered aloud.

“Think,” Obi-Wan said from where he was seated on a nearby root. He preferred to have Luke figure things out by himself, or for wise Master Yoda to instruct the young man. Since Anakin’s fall, he had lost a lot of faith in his abilities as a teacher, and it would take a while to fully regain it. “You know the answer.”

“Master Obi-Wan, moving stones and packing cases around is one thing. This is totally different.”

“No! No different! Only different in your mind,” Yoda put in, tapping his stick against the ground. “You must unlearn what you have learned.”

“But Master Yoda, it’s so big...” Luke said, kneeling before the Jedi Master.

“Size matters not. Look at me. Judge me by my size, do you? Hm?”

Luke shook his head.

“And well you should not. For my ally is the Force, and a powerful ally it is. Life creates it, makes it grow. Its energy surrounds us and binds us. Luminous beings are we...” Yoda pinched Luke’s shoulder, “...not this crude matter.” He swept his arm in a wide gesture, indicating the surrounding area. “You must feel the Force around you. Here, between you... me... Master Obi-Wan... the tree... the rock... everywhere! Yes, even between this land and that ship!”

Luke was quiet for a moment, staring out at the ship in the lake. He stood up. “All right, I’ll give it a try.”

“No! Try not,” Yoda admonished him. “Do — or do not. There is no try.”

Luke closed his eyes and focused on the Force. He felt the ship there in the lake. He concentrated, allowing the Force to flow through him, feeling it around him as Yoda had said.

Slowly, the X-wing’s nose began to rise above the water. It hovered for a moment, and Obi-Wan watched intently — it looked like the ship would slip back down.

But the X-Wing continued to rise majestically, until the entire ship was above the lake’s surface, streaming water. Luke guided it carefully to the shore and set it down. He opened his eyes and looked at the ship, seeming quite amazed. No — not amazed, for Luke now knew the power of the Force.

He turned back to Obi-Wan and Yoda, a grin spreading across his face. "I did it!" he exclaimed.

"Well done, Luke," Obi-Wan said quietly, with a smile of his own.

Yoda nodded silently at the young man. Luke had proved time and time again that he had the discipline and dedication to become a Jedi.

Luke looked again at his ship. He felt stronger in his connection to the Force, and now he had his transport back. *It's time to venture out alone...* "Masters," he began, turning to the Jedi. "I think it's time I went to help Han and Leia. I feel that they will need me."

"Ready, you think you are, hmm?" Yoda responded, eyeing Luke carefully.

After a slight beat of hesitation, Luke nodded.

"He is ready," Obi-Wan spoke up.

Yoda glanced at Obi-Wan. He turned and considered Luke thoughtfully. To Luke, it felt as if Yoda were searching his mind and spirit with his piercing gaze, judging his readiness and abilities, perhaps even sensing his future.

After a moment that felt like an age, the old Jedi Master nodded. "Very well," he consented. "If go you must, go you shall."

"Thank you, Master Yoda," Luke replied seriously. He looked up at Obi-Wan. 'I will return. My path to becoming a Jedi is not finished yet, I know. I'll come back as soon as Han is rescued.' He began to gather up his things. "Artoo, we're going!" he called to the small droid.

"May the Force be with you, Luke," Obi-Wan said gravely. "Do not forget what you have learned." It was time for the young man to venture out alone.

## Chapter Twelve

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**A/N:** More movie stuff — sorry! But there's a bit of a Leia-introspective bit at the end... and you know the drill — read, review, make me happy :)

**Laura-chan:** Thanks! Sorry about the wait, but it's necessary :)

**Sam:** Wow, thank you! Sorry about Lando, but I just felt that I couldn't write that much. Glad you like the story anyway.

**Athalassia:** Thank you for reviewing! Um... I think there's a little, at the end. Not much, sorry.

**Hopeless4life:** Thanks, I shall.

**TriGemini:** Yes, I agree, and that quote by Yoda is brilliant :) Thanks for reviewing!

**lala:** Yes, hooray! New chapter coming your way :)

**pokey:** Thanks, glad you liked it, and that's prettymuch what I was aiming for.

**Stephanie C:** Yes... thought I might change it like that. And yes... Obi-Wan's staying.

**Port-of-Seas:** Thank you for reviewing. I'm glad you still think this is good despite the OOC-ness.

**Princess-Aiel:** Thank you! Here you go!

**Emerald Green Queen:** Yeah — I must say I'm a sucker for good being the stronger power! Not too much action in this chapter, sorry, but in the next few there will be :)

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## Chapter Twelve

The windswept, sandy road to Jabba's palace was an odd place to find two droids. But there they were, making their way towards the massive, ominous structure.

Artoo-Detoo whistled timidly

"Don't be so sure," his golden counterpart, See-Threepio, replied. "If I told you half the things I've heard about this Jabba the Hutt, you'd probably short-circuit."

They fearfully approached the gate. Threepio looked up at it in apprehension.

"Artoo, are you sure this is the right place?" he asked. "I'd better knock, I suppose."

He timidly rapped on the metal door. Without waiting for an answer, he turned to Artoo and said, "There doesn't seem to be anyone there. Let's go back and tell Master Luke."

Suddenly, a mechanical arm with an electronic eye attached popped out of the door and inspected the droids.

"Tee chuta hhat yudd!" a strange voice came from the other side of the door.

"Goodness gracious me!" Threepio exclaimed. He pointed to Artoo and then at himself. "Artoo-Detoo-wha bo See-Threepio-wha ey toota odd mischka Jabba du Hutt."

There was a strange laugh, and the eye was retracted back into the door.



Threepio stared. "I don't think they're going to let us in, Artoo," he said to the astromech droid. "We'd better go." He turned to leave as Artoo beeped at him.

Just then, the door began to rise with a loud metallic screech. The droids turned back, and faced the darkness inside.

Artoo moved forward into the black. Threepio hurried after him as the door closed noisily behind, calling, "Wait! Artoo, wait for me! I really don't think we should rush into this."

Two huge Gamorrean guards emerged and fell in behind the droids. Artoo beeped nervously.

"Just you deliver Master Luke's message and get us out of here," Threepio instructed him.

Before they could move on, an odious-looking Twi'lek approached. It was Bib Fortuna. "Die wanna wanga," he said.

"Die wanna wanaga," Threepio replied. 'We bring a message to your master, Jabba the Hutt.' Artoo beeped. "And a gift," Threepio translated. He paused and whispered, puzzled, to Artoo, "Gift, what gift?"

Bib shook his head. "Nee Jabba no badda. Me chaade su goodie." He held his hand out to Artoo, but the droid slid back a bit, protesting.

Threepio paraphrased Artoo's long stream of beeps and whistles. "He says that our instructions are to give it only to Jabba himself." As Bib paused, thinking, Threepio added, "I'm terribly sorry. I'm afraid he's ever so stubborn about these sort of things."

The Twi'lek motioned for the two droids to follow him. "Nudd chaa," he said, moving into the darkness.

The droids followed, somewhat nervously. As they walked on, followed by the two guards, Threepio muttered, "Artoo, I have a bad feeling about this."

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"We're doomed," Threepio moaned as he took in the scene before him.

The room they had entered — the throne room — was filled with grotesque creatures of all species, drunk and raucous. The lewd crowd was revelling in the filth and mess of its own pleasure-seeking. It was a repulsive sight.

But by far the most repulsive of all of them was Jabba the Hutt. He was reclining on his throne at the front of the room, drool dripping thickly from his lipless mouth as he presided over the room.

Bib Fortuna moved to the throne and delicately leaned forward to whisper something to Jabba. The Hutt slitted his eyes slightly, then burst out in terrifying laughter. He motioned for the droids to come forward.

Threepio nudged Artoo. "The message, Artoo, the message," he prompted nervously.

Artoo whistled and projected a hologram of Luke onto the floor.

“Greetings, Exalted One,” the image of Luke said. ‘Allow me to introduce myself. I am Luke Skywalker, Jedi Knight and friend to Captain Solo. I know that you are powerful, mighty Jabba, and that your anger with Solo must be equally powerful. I seek an audience with Your Greatness to bargain for Solo’s life.’ Here the creatures in the room laughed loudly. “With your wisdom, I’m sure that we can work out an arrangement which will be mutually beneficial and enables us to avoid any unpleasant confrontation. As a token of goodwill, I present to you a gift: these two droids.”

“What did he say?” a startled Threepio exclaimed.

“Both a hardworking and will serve you well,” Luke’s hologram finished.

“This can’t be!” Threepio cried. “Artoo, you’re playing the wrong message.”

Jabba laughed a Fortuna spoke to him in Huttese.

“There will be no bargain,” Jabba announced in Huttese. He began to laugh again, a horrible sound that would have curdled Threepio’s blood if he had had any.

“We’re doomed,” the droid moaned as one of the Gamorrean guards marched him and Artoo away.

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As Leia pulled her gloves on, she asked herself for the fiftieth time why she was doing this.

*Why are you doing this, Leia? Why did you come out all this way when the Rebels are searching for a new planet to set up base? Why did you come out halfway across the galaxy to help a man who you’ve only known for a few months? Why did you come to rescue him when he’s made it clear a dozen times before that he’s independent and doesn’t need rescuing? Why are you doing this?*

And, once again, the answer came quickly and clearly. She had done all this — she was going to do all this — because she loved him.

Love. Such a deceptively simple word. Four letters that were so easy to think, one would suppose they were easy to say. But Leia couldn’t seem to speak the phrase aloud. It had taken all her courage to finally admit it to herself, let alone say it.

Yes, she loved him. But to actually give voice to the idea of it would make it completely real. And she couldn’t make it real yet, not when she had no idea of the way he felt. Was he even interested? Certainly, they bickered and argued, and sometimes found each other to be impossible, but Leia thought she detected something more in Han just before he left. His words had stung her, more than their usual disagreements.

*“...maybe by then you’ll have warmed up a little.”*

True, she had often been cold to him. But Leia now knew that she had unknowingly kept a cool and aloof façade to keep herself from delving deeper into her true feelings. Since he had left, however, she had missed him terribly and allowed herself to explore the way she felt about him.

His absence and her travelling had also given her space to think. She thought often of Alderaan, remembering the way it had been before the Empire had crushed it. She remembered her family. Though she now realised that they were not related to her by blood, she still thought of her Uncle Bail and his family as her own. It hurt her sorely to know that they were all gone.

She had pushed on and been strong for the Rebellion, but travelling through space had allowed her to grieve. Grieve for the planet she once called her home. Grieve for the people who were once hers. Grieve for the family she once called her own.

She had felt vaguely angry with her mother for lying to her all those years, but she had now come to the understanding that she had done it to protect them. And considering her mother's past, it was probably best that she had not known about it.

Her poor mother... to think your husband was dead only to find that he was alive and *evil* must be a terrible experience. No wonder she had almost fallen apart in the cell. She herself still could not bear to think of Vader as her father, not when he had tortured and hurt her so terribly. It would take time to accept it, time that maybe she did not have.

As she picked up her helmet, her thoughts returned to Han. Thinking back now, she believed that she had loved Han since he had helped rescue her and her mother from the Death Star, but had not given it any thought until that medal ceremony. And now, after those times that he had saved her, she was finally able to repay him.

She walked over to Chewbacca and Luke — her twin. It still took some getting used to, but she found the idea of Luke being her brother oddly comforting.

"Are you sure this will work?" she asked him a little uncertainly. After all, they had only come up with this scheme the previous day.

"Yes," Luke replied positively. 'I'm sure. Trust me.' He squeezed her shoulder. "You'll be fine, and we'll have Han back in no time."

She smiled and nodded, and then she turned to Chewbacca. "Are you ready?" she asked the Wookiee.

Chewbacca gave a low growl, which Leia took to be an affirmative response.

"Okay," she muttered, taking a deep breath and slipping her helmet on. "I'm ready."

## Chapter Thirteen

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**A/N:** Some almost-action in this chapter, but most of it's in the next one. Sorry! Bear with me — a Vader/Padmé confrontation is approaching soon.

**Hopeless4life:** Thank you! Cliffhangers, eh? No promises :P

**TriGemini:** Yep, I find Threepio and Artoo very amusing in the movies. I very much agree — it is definitely good that she's accepted Luke. I couldn't have it any other way :) Thanks for reviewing, as always — I love your reviews.

**Stephanie C:** Of course she loves Han! Who else could there be :D And to be honest, I used the movie novelisation for Bib's lines — I found it in my library by chance, and found it indispensable for my research for this story!

**Emerald Green Queen:** I agree — Han is... just... mmmm. lol. And no, there is no Han-flavoured popsicle (I can't believe I just called it a 'popsicle'. That's so American!), a very astute observation. However... he is in a bit of a fix, hehe. Thanks!

**pokey:** Thanks!

**Laura-chan:** Haha, I hope it will be! Thanks for reviewing :)

**padmenaberrie32:** Couldn't agree more with your thoughts regarding Padmé. Obi-Wan's line is from the movie, so that wasn't my idea :) Thank you for your lovely reviews, and here is the next chapter!

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## Chapter Thirteen

Threepio tried to keep a low profile near the back of the throne as Jabba's court continued their revelry. He had been separated from Artoo, and was now lonely as well as terrified, with nobody to talk to.

Suddenly, a quiet fell over the noisy room. Bib Fortuna made his way through the crowd, accompanied by two Gamorrean guards. Behind them walked a fierce-looking helmeted bounty hunter leading a captured Wookiee on a leash.

"Oh no! Chewbacca!" Threepio gasped.

Fortuna muttered something to Jabba, pointing to the bounty hunter and his captive. The bounty hunter bowed. "I have come for the bounty on this Wookiee," he said in Ubese.

"At last we have the mighty Chewbacca," Jabba boomed in Huttese. He laughed loudly and waved Threepio closer. The droid stepped forward reluctantly and began to translate as Jabba continued speaking.

"The illustrious Jabba bids you welcome and will gladly pay you the reward of twenty-five thousand," Threepio said.

The bounty hunter, Boushh, who had been examining the creatures around the room, replied in Ubese, "I want fifty thousand. No less."

Enraged, Jabba lashed out with his tail, knocking the protocol droid off the raised throne. The Hutt began to rant and rave in Huttese as Threepio struggled back onto the dais and composed himself.

“Uh, the mighty Jabba asks why we must pay fifty thousand,” Threepio loosely translated for the hunter.

Boushh lifted his hand, in which was a small silver ball. Threepio looked nervously from the ball to Jabba to the bounty hunter.

“Because he’s holding a thermal detonator!” he exclaimed.

Immediately, the guards and the other monsters in the room backed away and a tense hush fell over the room. All eyes were on the bold bounty hunter and the detonator in his hand, which was beginning to glow.

A sly grin crept over Jabba’s monstrous face, and he began to laugh loudly. “This bounty hunter is my kind of scum! Fearless and inventive,” he boomed in Huttese.

He continued. “Jabba offers the sum of thirty-five,” Threepio translated. “And I suggest you take it!” he added hastily, glancing at the Hutt.

The whole room waited for Boushh’s reaction. He flicked a switch and the detonator went dead. “Zeebuss,” he said.

“He agrees!” Threepio cried, relieved.

The crowd erupted in raucous cheers and applause as the band started up again and dancing girls took the centre of the floor. Chewbacca was led away, growling, by a couple of guards.

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Chewbacca was marched down the halls lined with holding cells. A slimy tentacle slithered through the bars of a cell and touched his shoulder, but he gave a ferocious roar and the tentacle snapped back into the cell in fright.

The guards opened a cell door and shoved the Wookiee in roughly. Chewbacca let out a plaintive howl as the door slammed shut.

“Chewie? Chewie!” a familiar voice exclaimed from the darkness.

The Wookiee turned and grabbed Han Solo in a tight hug, barking in joy, lifting him off his feet.

“Good to see you too, pal,” Han gasped with a grin as Chewbacca set him back down. “What are you doing here?”

Chewie filled him in on most of the plan.

“Luke? Luke’s crazy,” Han said, shaking his head. “He can’t even take care of himself, much less rescue anybody.”

Chewbacca barked a reply.

“A Jedi, huh? I’ll believe it when I see it,” Han muttered.

He was once again engulfed in a hug by his big furry co-pilot.

“I’m all right, Chewie,” he laughed. “I’m all right.”

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Night had fallen over Tatooine. The throne room was littered with the remains of the day’s celebrations. There were blood, wine and saliva stains on the floor and the unconscious bodies of drunken creatures slumped all over the furniture.

The dark figure of Boushh the bounty hunter moved stealthily through the shadows. He slipped through the halls of the holding cells, following the soft growls just barely audible in the quiet.

Boushh reached the cell holding the source of the growls. He lightly tapped on the bars, and there was an answering growl. “I’ll get you out of here,” he murmured quietly in Basic.

He pulled out a long thin piece of metal and proceeded to jimmy the lock, pausing now and then to listen for any passers-by. After a few tense moments, the lock clicked and the door slid open.

Chewbacca lurched out and grabbed the bounty hunter’s arm with a small howl.

“Quiet,” Boushh hissed. “We need to find —”

The Wookiee interrupted with a series of urgent, quiet barks and growls, shaking his arm and pointing back into the cell. Suddenly understanding, Boushh slipped inside the cell and knelt beside the sleeping form of Han Solo.

“Wake up,” he said, shaking the smuggler’s shoulder.

Han awoke with a start. He stared warily at the helmeted figure before him as he slowly sat up.

“Come on, we have to get out of here,” Boushh urged.

“I’m not going anywhere,” Han said firmly. He peered suspiciously at him. “Who are you, anyway?” he demanded.

In answer, the bounty hunter reached up and pulled off the helmet, revealing Princess Leia’s lovely face. A soft smirk curved her lips.

“Leia!” Han seemed to be in shock. “What are you doing here?”

She raised an eyebrow. “What does it look like? I’m getting you out of here.”

His lips twisted in a tiny smirk as he got to his feet. “Just couldn’t stay away, huh?” he couldn’t resist saying as he reached out a hand to help her up, and she held onto it a second longer.

She didn’t respond to the comment, but Han saw a tiny smile lift the corners of her lips before she quickly suppressed it and let go of his hand. Chewbacca gave a low, amused growl.

'Come on,' she ordered, and the three of them snuck quietly out of the holding area.

They had begun to weave through the throne room when they heard it. An awful, obscene cackle that came from an alcove concealed by a curtain.

"I know that laugh," Han said with dread. Slowly, they turned.

The curtain fell away to reveal Jabba, Bib Fortuna, Boba Fett and several guards, all laughing at the three companions.

"Han, my boy, your taste in companions has improved, even if your luck has not," Jabba purred.

"Listen, Jabba, I was on my way back to pay you when I got a little sidetracked," Han said, trying to smooth-talk his way out of this mess. "Now I know we've had our differences, but I'm sure we can work this out..."

"I've heard all this the day you came here, Solo, and it's too late for that now. You may have been the best smuggler in the business, but now you're Bantha fodder." He turned to the guards. 'Take him away — and his Wookiee companion,' he ordered. "I will decide how to kill them later."

The guards seized all three and dragged Chewbacca and Han back to the holding cells.

"I'll pay you triple," Han called. "Jabba, you're throwing away a fortune. Don't be a fool!"

The guard holding the struggling princess began to lead her away, but Jabba stopped them. "Wait! Bring her to me."

Leia stood her ground before the slobbering Hutt, her anger building. She fixed the monarch with an icy glare. "We have powerful friends, Jabba. You will soon regret this."

"I'm sure, I'm sure," the gangster said gleefully. "But in the meantime, I will thoroughly enjoy the pleasure of your company." He pulled her towards him.

And behind him, Threepio turned away, unable to watch.

## Chapter Fourteen

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**A/N:** Thank you to my kind reviewers, and to anyone who reads this story. There's some action this chapter! Confrontation is coming in a couple of chapters.

**pokey:** Thanks!

**Kal's Girl:** Sure will!

**TriGemini:** Oh, I couldn't agree more. Who would want to spend time with Jabba? He's a giant blob. An evil blob. Lol. Thanks for reviewing!

**padmenaberrie32:** Your review made me laugh, lol. :) That would definitely be amusing. Glad you like the way I'm writing this story. Thank you for reviewing!

**Hopeless4life:** Well, yeah, I guess it was. Sorry! But a lot of my endings are semi-cliffhangers, lol. Thanks!

**ChibiAzn3:** Wow — did you read all 14 chapters in one sitting? Thanks! You'll have to wait for the ending to see what happens with Luke and Anakin. Thank you for your reviews!

**doreenthatshot:** Thank you! I shall :)

**LaPapillion:** Lol, thanks — glad you liked the cliffhanger!

**Emerald Green Queen:** Ha, yeah, no paddle-pop and no wake-up kiss — glad you see my reasons! Things will move on even more briskly from now on, but I hope it's not too rushed :)

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### Chapter Fourteen

Leia was fuming silently. Being chained to Jabba the Hutt, scantily clad in a gold metal bikini, was not part of the original plan. Yes, part of the plan had been to try and break Han out, or to infiltrate the court to get him out later, but she had not counted on having most of her dignity stripped away as well as most of her clothes.

She wondered where Luke was and how long it would take for him to arrive. The longer he took, the more Leia was tempted to kill the vile gangster she was chained to, as well as every one of his loathsome cronies, and such behaviour was beneath her. She was a Princess and a Senator, after all. She had been taught that a diplomatic situation was always the first option. But still — anyone who met Jabba the Hutt would surely see that negotiation would be futile. Luke was the only person she knew who might have a chance of succeeding.

And then she felt a faint stirring, a presence in her mind — he was close now. And so she smiled and settled back to wait.

---

Luke encountered little opposition when he walked into the palace, and the challenges he did meet he dismissed with a wave of his hand, a few well-chosen words and the Force. Using these techniques, he managed to manipulate Bib Fortuna to bring him before Jabba, convincing the Twi'lek that he would be rewarded.

Bib approached the throne and introduced Luke to Jabba in Huttese.



"I told you not to admit him," Jabba growled.

"I must be allowed to speak," Luke interjected, slipping the weight of the Force into his voice.

"He must be allowed to speak," Bib obediently repeated in Huttese.

Furious, Jabba shoved Bib away violently. "You weak-minded fool!" he roared. "He's using an old Jedi mind trick!"

Luke stared hard at the Hutt. He glanced once at Leia, feeling her anger and pain through the Force, and then he turned all his focus and attention back to Jabba. He needed to concentrate, and he felt Leia close her mind to him so as not to distract him.

"You will bring Captain Solo and the Wookiee to me," he said clearly and firmly.

Jabba chuckled mockingly. "Your mind powers will not work on me, boy."

Luke didn't even blink. "Nevertheless, I'm taking Captain Solo and his friends. You can either profit by this or be destroyed — it's your choice. But I warn you not to underestimate my powers."

The old gangster let out a booming, mocking laugh. "There will be no bargain, young Jedi." Before Luke reacted, Jabba turned to his guards. "Bring Solo and the Wookiee to me!" he ordered.

Luke's eyebrows twitched slightly, imperceptibly. He sensed danger in Jabba's order, but he decided not to act — yet.

A few minutes passed in which Jabba gave instructions to be translated by Threepio, and then the crowd parted as Han and Chewbacca were brought forward.

"Han!" Luke greeted his friend.

"Luke!" Han mimicked with a grin.

"Are you all right?"

"Fine. Together again, huh?"

"Wouldn't miss it," Luke grinned.

"How are we doing?"

"Same as always."

"That bad, huh?" Han asked with a wry smile. He looked up at the throne, and his eyes widened when they set on Leia, chained to the gangster. "Leia!" He stared at her, worrying about what Jabba had done to her. Knowing the kind of Hutt that Jabba was, Han was genuinely concerned for the princess, though he faltered when he tried to speak it aloud — something seemed to stop him. His concern was stemming from another emotion... one he hadn't tried to explore yet, one that was foreign to him... but... it felt good.

"I'm fine," was all she said in reply, and her familiar voice and the strength he saw in her face reassured him. She looked a little angry and disgusted from being so close to Jabba, but she seemed all right.

Threepio stepped forward hesitantly to translate for the three friends.

“Oh dear... His High Exaltedness, the great Jabba the Hutt, has decreed that you are to be terminated immediately.”

“Good, I hate long waits,” Han interrupted loudly.

“You will therefore be taken to the Dune Sea and cast into the pit of Carkoon, the nesting place of the all-powerful Sarlacc.”

Han turned to Luke. “Doesn’t sound so bad.”

“In his belly, you will find a new definition of pain and suffering, as you are slowly digested over a thousand years.”

“On second thought, let’s pass on that one, huh?” Han was liking this less and less. Chewie barked in agreement.

“You should have bargained, Jabba,” Luke said. “That’s the last mistake you’ll ever make.”

Jabba laughed evilly, and the guards began to drag the prisoners away. They moved close by the throne, and Leia reached out to touch Han’s cheek. She could tell that Luke knew what he was doing, but there was a chance things would go wrong — and this could be the last time she saw any of them. It was now or never.

“I love you,” she whispered to the captain. Those words, finally spoken aloud, felt so right that she wondered why she hadn’t said them earlier. And she thanked the heavens that she had been given the chance to say them to him before what could be his doom.

His face froze for a fraction of a second, and then melted into a small, sincere smile. “I know,” was all he said, but in his eyes Leia saw the unspoken words he had meant. She saw that he was surprised, but pleased. She saw that her inner battle had not been in vain, that he felt the same way about her. And in the face of the impending execution, she felt a strange peace and happiness wash over her.

As Luke passed by, he gave her a short nod.

*Don’t worry, Leia. We’ll be fine*, she heard him say in her mind. She did not question this odd sensation, this bond — they were twins, after all, and now she knew that Force sensitivity ran in the family. It was unexpected, but not surprising.

*Be careful, Luke*, she thought, knowing that, somehow, he had heard her.

As she watched them being dragged from the throne room, she could have sworn she saw Han wink at her.

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Jabba’s enormous Sail Barge glided over the surface of the desert of Tatooine. Accompanying it were two small skiffs, one of which was holding the prisoners.

As they approached the Pit of Carkoon, the monsters inside the Sail Barge continued to eat, drink and have a good time. Threepio wandered among them, trying not to disturb any of

the revellers. As he sidestepped a rowdy argument, he bumped into a small droid serving drinks, which spilled everywhere. The little droid beeped and whistled angrily.

“Oh, I’m terribly sor —” Threepio began, until he peered closer at the droid. ‘Artoo! What are you doing here?’ He listened to the short reply. “Well, I can see you’re serving drinks, but this place is dangerous,” he replied. “They’re going to execute Master Luke and, if we’re not careful, us too!”

Artoo whistled, his response sounding almost singsong.

Threepio straightened up. “I wish I had your confidence.”

The barge and the skiffs moved over a huge sand pit. The prisoners’ skiff moved out directly over the centre. A plank extended from the edge and Luke was released from his bonds and shoved out onto the plank. Directly below him was the Sarlacc — a mucous-lined hole surrounded by thousands of sharp teeth, tentacles waving.

Back in the barge, Jabba and Leia stood by the rail, watching. The Hutt villain mumbled something to Threepio, and then raised his stubby arms for silence. Threepio’s voice was amplified over loudspeakers.

“Victims of the almighty Sarlacc: His Excellency hopes that you will die honourably. But should any of you wish to beg for mercy, the great Jabba the Hutt will now listen to your pleas.”

Han stepped forward arrogantly. “Threepio, you tell that slimy piece of worm-ridden filth he’ll get no such pleasure from us. Right?”

Chewbacca growled in agreement.

“Jabba! This is your last chance,” Luke called. “Free us or die.”

Unnoticed, Artoo slipped up to the upper deck as Jabba’s court laughed.

“Move him into position,” Jabba ordered. He made a thumbs-down gesture. “Put him in!”

The guards prodded Luke to the edge of the plank. The young man glanced up and flipped a jaunty salute to Artoo. A flap opened on the droid’s domed head.

Luke jumped off the plank, and a bloodthirsty cheer went up — but Luke spun around in mid-air and caught the edge of the plank with his fingertips. The plank bent with his weight, then catapulted him up. He flipped and dropped down onto the spot he had just left, facing the guards. Casually, he raised his arm, and his lightsaber dropped into his waiting palm, shot by Artoo.

In one fluid movement, Luke ignited his blade and sent the first guard overboard into the mouth of the Sarlacc. Other guards swarmed to him, but he cut through them until he reached Han and Chewie. With a quick stab, he disarmed their guards, and then he cut their bonds. Han grabbed a discarded rifle lying on the deck and began firing at the remaining guards.

When Jabba saw what was going on, he exploded, yelling furiously at those around him. The room collapsed into uproar, creatures rushing everywhere. And Leia saw her chance in this confusion.

She leaped onto Jabba's throne, grabbed her own chain and wrapped it around his throat. Jumping off the other side, she pulled violently with all her strength.

The Hutt bucked and tried to break free of the chain, but still Leia pulled, drawing not only on her own strength, but on the energy she felt in the room, an energy she felt all around her. An energy that gave her strength beyond her own.

It was in this moment that Princess Leia felt the Force.

With one last effort, Jabba lunged forward — his eyes bulged and his tongue flopped from his mouth. He twitched once and died. Artoo appeared from nowhere and sliced through Leia's chain, freeing her at last.

Boba Fett ignited his rocket pack and flew from the barge to the skiff. But before he could fire, Luke sliced his gun in half. Just then, the skiff was rocked by blasts from the barge's cannon, and tilted. Chewie and Han were thrown against the rail, but recovered quickly. Han began to fire at Boba.

The second skiff, full of guards, sped up, firing at them. Luke leapt into the centre of the soldiers and waded through them with graceful sweeps of his lightsaber.

Boba turned and aimed at the young Jedi — but Han fired off a shot directly at the bounty hunter's rocket pack. It exploded, throwing Boba into the air, over the edge of the skiff — and into the Sarlacc's mouth, as Han gave a whoop of success.

Meanwhile, Leia, Artoo and Threepio had raced off to the deck guns. Luke appeared suddenly, slicing through the deck gunners and guards. Leia ran to the second deck gun, shooting first the barge's rigging, and then the first deck gun.

"Point it down," Luke shouted to his sister. She obeyed quickly as Artoo beeped and nudged Threepio at the rail.

"I can't, Artoo!" Threepio wailed. "It's too far to jump..."

Artoo gave the golden droid a firm shove over the edge, and then followed, tumbling towards the sand.

Luke grabbed Leia with one arm and grabbed a rope from the rigging with the other.

"Come on, kid, you gonna join this party or what?" Han yelled to him over the noise of explosions and screams.

"Coming!" Luke yelled back, and kicked the trigger of the deck gun. He jumped into the air with his sister as the cannon exploded into the deck.

They swung down to the empty skiff that Luke had sprung from, and Luke steered it over to collect Han and Chewbacca, as the Sail Barge continued to explode.

They glided to where two golden legs were sticking out of the sand, accompanied by a small periscope. Luke grinned and lowered a large electromagnet from a compartment in the skiff's hull. The two droids shot out of the desert and locked onto the magnet with a loud clang.

As the Sail Barge burned, the skiff sailed across the desert, its occupants laughing and hugging each other in relief and joy.

“I see you’ve warmed up a little, Princess,” Han said to Leia as they stood close together in a corner.

“And I see you’re still the same — a scoundrel who can’t rescue himself,” she shot back with a smirk.

He took her hand in both of his, kneading it lightly with his fingers. “You don’t have enough scoundrels in your life,” he said, leaning closer.

“I prefer nice men,” she whispered, keeping up the banter, yet leaning in too.

“I can be a nice man,” Han murmured.

And then their lips met in a long, sweet kiss.

## Chapter Fifteen

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**A/N:** We are rapidly approaching the confrontation! But first, there's a bit of background and introspection in this chapter. Not including this one, there are only four more to go.

**Stephanie C:** Yay indeed :) Will have to keep you in suspense just a little longer — sorry!

**Mizra:** Lol, yes, I have watched all the movies over and over, and this story just gave me an excuse to watch them even more! Hope this was fast enough for you :)

**Kal's Gal:** Sure will!

**padmenaberrie32:** Yeah, it's in the movie. Guess it runs in the family, eh? Lol. Glad you liked the chapter. Yes, the confrontation (of sorts) is approaching, as is the end of this story, and there sort of will be yelling, lol.

**TriGemini:** Glad you liked it :) Yes, Padmé is in this chapter (bit of angst for her — poor dear, she's had a rough time in this story!), as is Vader (bit of angst for him too). Your questions are answered in this chapter, and thank you so much for faithfully reviewing!

**Chou hime:** :) Thanks! Glad you like this story.

**Hopeless4life:** Thank you! I thought I might toss in some nice romance since I cut out a lot of the movie romance.

**P.P.M:** Lol, sure thing — just a little snippet from both Padmé and Vader, and a LOT more next chapter! Hope you like it :)

**ChibiAzn3:** Aw, thank you so much! Glad you like it :)

**Princess-Aiel:** Thanks! Here's the next chapter for you.

**doreenthatsot:** Thank you.

**Emerald Green Queen:** No worries — any reviews at any time make me happy :) Glad you liked the chapter, and the twins' bond. Good to know it's not too rushed! Thanks for reviewing :)

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## Chapter Fifteen

"I'll contact you when I'm done," Luke said over his comlink. He was seated in his X-wing with Artoo.

"Jedi business?" Leia's voice asked from the Millennium Falcon.

Luke smiled. "That's right."

Han's voice crackled over the comlink. "Hey, Luke, thanks. Thanks for comin' after me. Now I owe you one."

"No problem, Han," Luke replied.

A message from Artoo appeared on Luke's screen. The young Jedi smiled as he started up his fighter.

"That's right, Artoo," he said to the droid. "We're going to the Dagobah system. I have a promise to keep... to some old friends."

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Padmé leaned on the balustrade, looking out to the lake. When she had first arrived, she had been terrified that Darth Vader would appear at any moment, worried for her children's safety. She had been afraid of the night — the darkness and shadows were threatening, especially when she was here alone. She could not contact her family on Naboo for their safety, and she had let the handmaidens go home. She needed to confront her husband alone — but now she felt terribly lonely.

He husband... Padmé sighed and gathered her arms closer. Being here in the lake resort only served to remind her of the man she loved. Here, standing at this very balcony, was where they had shared their first kiss, and where they were married.

A slow, dreamy smile spread across her face as she remembered the wedding. Anakin had looked so handsome. She had been nervous — they both had been nervous. What they were doing was forbidden and had to be kept secret. But when she saw that little smile on his face, her fears had melted away, and she knew that he would protect her for the rest of their lives.

Padmé's smile faded at this thought. Another image came to mind — his face on Mustafar. She felt again the pressure on her throat, heard his refusal to listen to her pleas...

*Protection?* she thought bitterly. *He almost killed me trying to 'protect' me.*

But even though he had hurt her so terribly, she knew in her heart that she was still in love with him. How could she not be? He was still her husband. She had promised to love him for the rest of her life, and she was bound to that promise. Her heart didn't listen to her head.

Her thoughts turned to her children. Luke was probably training to be a Jedi under Obi-Wan, and Leia would be doing something for the Alliance... but there was no way of knowing for sure. Padmé didn't know if they were hurt, in danger or safe. All she could do was trust that they were all right.

A chill breeze blew her hair about her face, and she shivered. She knew he would come for her soon, and she was almost impatient for his arrival. Though she was dreading it, it was better than waiting with her terrible memories.

---

Yoda tapped across the floor of his cottage to where Luke was seated beside Obi-Wan.

"Hmm. That face you make. Look I so old to young eyes?" the short Jedi Master asked Luke.

The young man tried to hide the expression on his face. Yoda did indeed seem much frailer, weaker somehow, though he hadn't thought the Jedi Master could ever be weak. "No, of course not," he lied.

Yoda chuckled. "I do, yes, I do! Sick I have become. Old and weak. When nine hundred years old you reach, look as good you will not. Hmm?" He chuckled again, but his laugh ended with a cough. He hobbled over to his bed. "Soon will I rest. Yes, forever sleep. Earned it, I have." He sat down on his bed, not without effort.

“Master Yoda, you can’t die,” Luke said plaintively as he moved over to sit beside the bed. It seemed almost like a plea, a disbelieving plea.

“The Jedi are powerful, but not all-powerful,” Obi-Wan spoke up from his shadowy corner. “Death is a natural part of life. We flow from life into the Force — it is not a mournful thing.”

“Yes,” Yoda agreed. “Twilight is upon me and soon night must fall. That is the way of the Force.”

“But I need your help,” Luke argued. He turned to Obi-Wan. “I need *both* your help. I’ve come back to complete the training.”

“No more training do you require. Already know you that which you need.” Yoda lay back on his bed with a sigh.

“Then I am a Jedi?” Luke asked eagerly.

The old Jedi shook his head. “Not yet. One thing remains: Vader. You must confront Vader. Then, only then, a Jedi will you be. And confront him you will.”

“Confront him? But — but Vader is my father!”

“Face him you must,” Yoda insisted. ‘Remember, a Jedi’s strength flows from the Force. But beware. Anger, fear, aggression — the Dark Side are they. Once you start down the Dark path, forever will it dominate your destiny.’ Coughs wracked the old master’s tiny form, and he beckoned Luke closer. “Luke... do not underestimate the powers of the Emperor, or... suffer your father’s fate, you will. Luke... the Force will be... with... you.”

He caught his breath and a shiver ran through him — and then he closed his eyes and was still. Luke stared in amazement as Yoda’s body vanished.

“He’s gone,” Luke said dazedly, turning to Obi-Wan.

Obi-Wan nodded slowly. “He has become one with the Force,” he answered, his face sad.

There was silence for a long minute, each man remembering the extraordinary, wise Jedi Master. And then Obi-Wan remembered that the Jedi spent little time in mourning, instead celebrating the passing into the Force. He smiled again, without the taint of sadness. Yoda would be with them still.

Luke’s voice spoke up quietly. “Obi-Wan, I can’t do this.”

“You cannot escape your destiny,” Obi-Wan said simply.

The young man said nothing, but the older Jedi sensed his trepidation. He continued to speak. “To be a Jedi, Luke, you must confront and then go beyond the Dark Side — the side your father couldn’t get past. You are strong and patient — your training is complete. All that remains is for you to face Darth Vader.”

“I can’t kill my own father,” Luke replied. “Not when I know there is still good in him.”

Obi-Wan sighed. “Anakin was like a brother to me, but I could not help him. If you can find some way to turn him back to the Light side, do so. Otherwise... the Emperor has already won.”



Luke fell quiet again, contemplating his mentor's words. He finally began to accept what Obi-Wan was telling him. He had to face his father, and if he could not turn him back to the Light... he had to be prepared to kill him.

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath. "Where can I find him?" he asked his companion.

"You know the answer."

"Mother..." the young man muttered. "She wanted to confront him — she could be in real danger."

Obi-Wan nodded slightly. "Then you must go."

---

Darth Vader paced his chambers on his Super Star Destroyer, the Executor. He had searched hundreds of systems to find his wife, yet had neglected to search the one place he now saw was glaringly obvious.

Naboo.

It made sense for her to be on her home planet — not only did the Empire consider it unimportant, but it was also the place she felt safe and comfortable.

The place of her happiest and fondest memories.

As the Executor moved towards the small planet, Vader allowed himself to speculate on her reaction when he approached her. He knew she would have been thinking of him since he had revealed his identity to her. The Dark Lord hoped that she had come to accept the truth. He did truly love her, and the purpose of his search was to find her and be reunited with her. Together, they could command the galaxy, travel further and bestow the peace of the Empire on other systems. They could find their children and live as a family, the way they had planned.

Yet the thought of ruling the Empire left him feeling... hollow. It was all the power he could want, but it gave him no satisfaction to imagine taking it.

He remembered his days as a Jedi, when he had had friends, a brother, direction, a purpose...

No. He stopped pacing and shook his head fiercely in an attempt to clear it. His Jedi 'friends' had been traitors. They had failed to help him or his wife and children. Obi-Wan, his 'brother', had turned against him. The Dark Side was his drive now, serving the Emperor his purpose.

He turned and stalked out of his chambers. They would be approaching Naboo soon, and he had to approach in a small, unobtrusive TIE fighter so as not to arouse too much suspicion. Soon he would be with his wife again.

Soon.

## Chapter Sixteen

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**A/N:** Here it is — the long-awaited confrontation! Of course, this isn't the end, and it may not be quite as you have been expecting... hehe. Hope you all like it!

**Stephanie C:** Thanks, glad you liked it. And you can see in this chapter whether or not Luke joins them ;)

**pokey:** Thank you ;)

**Chou hime:** Hi! Thank you so much ;)

**Princess-Aiel:** Thanks, I shall

**Snow Lepord:** Wait no longer! Thanks for reviewing.

**Hopeless4Life:** Lol, thanks.

**Miss.S.P:** Thank you! Just a few more chapters to go.

**padmenaberrie32:** Oh, wow, thank you! I'm glad this makes sense ;)

**TriGemini:** Well now, all your questions are answered in this chapter! Is it possible? Just read on ;) Thanks for reviewing — as always, you made me smile!

**DarthGladiator45:** Here's the V-P confrontation — the L-V one is sort of here, but sort of not. It's... guh, just read ;)

**Emerald Green Queen:** Lol, glad you're happy to have her back. I do somewhat agree with you on Yoda... I suppose I just felt that someone should die, since I kept Obi-Wan. I don't know, I can't really explain my reasoning, but rest assured it makes sense in my head! Lol. Thanks!

**Linwe-Amari:** Oh gosh, don't die! You must live for this chapter! Thanks so much for reviewing ;)

**doreenthatsnot:** Thanks very much :) Yes ma'am, I shall update right away!

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## Chapter Sixteen

Luke climbed into the cockpit of his X-wing and switched on his comlink.

"Leia? It's Luke."

There was a bit of crackling, and then Leia's voice answered. "Are you coming back to base?" she asked. "We're going to move to Hoth soon."

"No, I'm going to Naboo," he replied.

"Naboo? Why?"

There was a pause. "I have to face Darth Vader."

"What? Why?" Leia asked, shocked. "Why must you confront him?"

Luke sighed. "Because... because there is good in him. I can't explain how I know, but I do. I feel it. And I can save him. I can turn him back to the good side. I have to try."

Silence. Then — “Be careful, Luke. And — and look after our mother. Make sure she’s all right.”

“I will,” Luke promised, and he signed off.

Obi-Wan stepped up to the cockpit. “May the Force be with you, Luke.” *May it protect you.*

The young man nodded in thanks, and then fired up his fighter. Seconds later he was off, speeding away towards Naboo.

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Vader sped towards the lake retreat in the speeder he had ‘borrowed’ from the old man, Paddy. In reality, all he had had to do was state his destination and point a warning finger, and the old man had let him take it. He hadn’t even needed to use Force persuasion or aggression. His own well-known, imposing figure was persuasion enough.

He quickly secured the speeder at the dock and took the steps two at a time. The thought of seeing her again, reasoning with her, simply *talking* to her, motivated him to move as quickly as he could. He left the top stair and moved forward onto the terrace.

And there she was.

She was standing with her back to him, in the same spot their wedding had taken place, leaning on the balustrade and staring out into the distance. Her clothing was simple, unlike the ornate gowns she had worn as queen or senator, and he could see the flecks of grey in her long hair. He breathed deeply the scent so familiar to him as his wife’s, closed his eyes and felt her warm presence in the Force...

He stepped up behind her, close but not too close. “Padmé.” It felt strange to say her name aloud again, yet the word fell as perfectly from his lips as it had so long ago, as if it had been waiting to escape.

She didn’t turn at first. She knew that he was there before he said her name — she had felt it somehow, like a tiny ripple of darkness and light. She squeezed her eyes shut, praying silently for strength.

“Hello, Anakin,” she said softly, and then she turned to face him.

“That is not my name,” he replied, somewhat coldly... or maybe that was because of the way his voice sounded inside his helmet. “It holds no meaning for me.”

She lifted her chin and tried to squash her fear. It seemed easier not to think of him as her husband while he had that mask on, easier to recall the terrible dark deeds Darth Vader had done in it, but she kept remembering the man behind it and the love she had felt — and still felt — for him. “If you are my husband, then that is your name.”

He was silent, caught by her words. She looked away, uncomfortable under the gaze of his black mask. He didn’t seem like her Anakin any more — but then again, when she had met him on Mustafar twenty years ago, he had been a different person. She had been afraid of him. And she realised that she was afraid of Darth Vader now.

“You’ve changed,” she said simply, breaking the silence, looking back at him.

Her statement seemed to catch him a little off-guard. “Yes. For the better.” She said nothing, only looked at him so disbelieving, so sceptically, that he felt he had to justify his words. “I am stronger now. More powerful. I know the truth and clarity of the Dark Side. And it was this path, this power that saved you.”

“*Saved* me?” She gave a humourless breath of laughter. “You didn’t save me, *Vader*.” She spat out the last word like it was a curse.

“Yes I did. You were going to die, but I saved you.”

Padmé was shocked at the certainty in his voice. He had not even been there when she gave birth, had not searched for her... Obi-Wan had told her that Vader believed that she was dead — yet when she appeared on the Death Star, he must have convinced himself that she was alive because of him. It was almost unbelievable.

Slowly, she shook her head. “No. You didn’t. I almost died because of you.” Her voice rose as her emotions took over. “Because of your *choice*, your *path*... I lost the will to *live*. I didn’t want to live anymore because of what you did! And I would have died if it weren’t for my children. *You* didn’t save me. My children did. I only stayed alive because I had them.”

Vader was stunned by her passionate speech. And for the first time since discovering she was alive, he began to doubt himself and his chosen path. Was what she was saying really true? Had he failed her? So many questions tumbled through his head. Why had the Emperor lied about Padmé’s death? Had he known? If not, why hadn’t he?

Padmé shut her eyes again, calming herself. “What do you want from me?” she whispered.

His flesh arm was trembling slightly, and he shifted. “I want you to come with me. I want you to bring our children to me. I want to live as a family, ruling the Empire. I want you to be with me again as my wife.”

“Your wife.” She opened her eyes again. “I am your wife.”

“And yet you act as though you despise me.”

“I don’t despise you, Anakin. I despise Vader. I despise what has made you this way, the darkness that has twisted you,” she replied calmly in a voice not devoid of emotion. “For a long time after the birth of the twins, I hated being your wife. I cursed my decision to marry you, because it was that decision that made you abandon the Jedi and destroy the Republic — turn your back on everything good and just. When you choked me on Mustafar, you weren’t just hurting me physically. You broke my heart. I tried to tell you I loved you, but you called me a liar. The Anakin I married would never have doubted my love, and he would never have hurt me or broken my heart.”

Vader made a move as if to speak, but Padmé continued as if she had not noticed. Now was her time to speak, to pour out everything she had kept hidden for twenty years.

“Then I had my children and my heart healed a little. I thought you were gone, and as hard as that was, it didn’t hurt nearly as much as finding that you were alive and seeing what you’ve become. An entire planet was destroyed by your hand. Millions of innocent people

were killed, entire species and ways of life lost forever. You even tortured your own daughter!”

“I did not know she was my daughter,” Vader countered defensively.

“It doesn’t matter!” Padmé exclaimed, throwing up her hands. ‘My Anakin would never have treated another life form so cruelly. My husband would never have killed so many innocents. He would not have turned on his family or destroyed the democracy we had worked so hard to build.’ She seemed to control herself and calmed a little. “But the saddest part is that even when I was choking, even when I heard about Alderaan, even when I saw my daughter’s scars — I still loved you, Anakin. I will always love you.” Turning her head aside, she drew a deep, shuddering breath and finished in a soft, broken voice: “And that is why I will go with you, even though all my logic screams at me to run away.”

It took a few seconds for her final words to register, but once he had grasped their meaning, Vader stood taller in what Padmé took to be a posture of triumph, though she knew she had shaken him with her words. He extended his black-gloved hand to her, but she wasn’t finished yet.

“I will go with you,” she continued, “but I will not — I cannot — accept your path as my own. Do you remember what I said to you on Mustafar?”

*Every word*, Vader thought, though his memories only surfaced now. He had refused to think of that day for a long time.

“I told you that I would always love you, but you were going down a path I couldn’t follow. And that is still true now. I will not betray the Alliance, and I will not bow to the Emperor — but I will go with you.” *I need to protect my children. I need to reason with my husband — and I can only do that if I win back his trust.*

He lowered his hand, and narrowed his eyes behind the mask. Vader was not used to not getting what he specifically asked for any more, but when it came to his wife, he was willing to make exceptions — small ones. This was not the victory he had come for... but it was better than nothing.

“Very well,” was all he said. He turned and began to walk back to the water speeder, and she trailed behind.

Suddenly, a shadow shifted, and Padmé saw a figure standing at the top of the stairs. It was Luke.

---

Vader halted at the sight of the young man. He knew instantly that he was his son — not only could he see his own features in his face, but he also felt his presence in the Force. He must have missed it when he was preoccupied with Padmé. Good. This made everything easier — he could bring Luke to the Dark Side now.

“So you have come to me,” the Sith Lord said. Luke did not answer, merely gazing at the imposing figure before him. “The Emperor is expecting you. He believes you will turn to the Dark Side.”

"I know... Father." The word was strange to Luke, yet having said it and kept under control, he felt calmer somehow.

"So you know the truth."

"I have accepted the truth that you were once Anakin Skywalker, my father."

"Do not call me by that name!" Vader growled. With every mention of his former name, the part of him he thought he had defeated gained strength and threatened to break free of its shadowy prison. It would not do for him to remember that side of him — it may lead to regret. And a Sith Lord has no regrets.

"It is the name of your true self," Luke continued steadily. "You have only forgotten. I know there is good in you. The Emperor hasn't driven it fully away."

Padmé's heart swelled with pride as she looked at her son, standing his ground calmly and without fear. He had become the kind of Jedi Anakin had been a long time ago. And yet her heart beat faster, and she prayed silently that he would be safe.

Vader shook his head. "Obi-Wan once thought as you do —"

"Don't blame him for your fall," Luke interrupted, stepping closer. "And I am not the only one with this conviction — my mother believes it too."

The Dark Lord turned to regard his wife for a moment. Her face was fearful, yet filled with determination and pride in her son. She wordlessly nodded her agreement with Luke. It was a tiny nod, but it was assent nonetheless. He turned back to Luke, choosing to push aside thoughts of his wife. "You don't know the power of the Dark Side. I must obey my master."

"I will not turn — you will be forced to destroy me."

*Destroy...* The word rang in Vader's ears. Padmé had reminded him of all he had already destroyed to reach this point. Could he destroy his son? Did he *want* to? He had sworn he would not fail again... but — he had already failed Padmé. What was one more sin in his already full book? It made no difference. He was already a lost man.

"If that is your destiny."

Padmé's eyes filled with tears. *No... not Luke. Not my son. Please, Anakin, please... don't do this... come back to me...*

Vader heard Padmé's pleas clearly in his mind, and he was momentarily torn. He loved her completely, and did not want to cause her any more pain... and he loved his son too... but he had chosen the Dark Side and he served his master. How could he turn back?

"Search your feelings, Father," Luke said, sensing what was going through his mind. "You can't do this. I feel the conflict within you. Let go of your hate."

Vader let himself fall into the Dark Side, and its waves, although not as comfortable as they had been before, gave him dark focus and strength. "Someone has filled your mind with foolish ideas, young one. The Emperor will show you the true nature of the Force. *He* is your master now." He waved a hand and a pair of binders flew from his belt and attached themselves around Luke's wrists. He held out a hand and called Luke's lightsaber to him, placing it in his belt. "It is too late for me."

As Vader walked past him and motioned for them both to follow, Luke answered quietly, "Then my father is truly dead."

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As soon as they entered the Executor, Padmé spoke up.

"Where are you taking us?" she asked Vader, resigned to her fate.

"In light of these recent... developments," the Dark Lord answered, "we will have an audience with the Emperor on Coruscant." *The Emperor will make Luke see reason.*

Padmé turned to her son and embraced him. "I never wanted you to get involved," she whispered sadly. "I never wanted it to come to this."

"It was not under your control," he said gently. "It was the will of the Force. There will be an end soon enough."

As he was taken away by guards, following Vader, Luke smiled a brave farewell to his mother and closed his eyes to meditate.

He would confront the Dark Side. And he would draw his father from it, or become one with the Force. Either way, he would defeat it.

## Chapter Seventeen

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**A/N:** Thank you all so much for your reviews! The response to the last chapter was overwhelming — thank you! Here's the next chapter for you, in which Luke meets the Emperor...

**TriGemini:** Wow, thank you so much! I'm so glad you liked the chapter that much. Your review was spot-on. I love reading your reviews — thank you for them!

**Stephanie C:** Glad you liked it! Well, his lungs aren't horrifically burnt up, so he doesn't have the respirator. Just the suit. Lol.

**LVB:** Thank you for reviewing;) I agree, that was a large amount of stupid screenwriting there. Lol.

**pokey:** Thanks :)

**DarthGladiator45:** Thank you, hope you like this chapter!

**Nautica7mk:** I'm glad you like it. Thanks for reviewing :)

**Mizra:** Thank you! May the Force be with you too ;)

**Laua-chan:** Thanks, I certainly shall!

**padmenaberrie32:** Yeah, I agree — I guess that's what makes him human, eh? I yell at the Emperor too! Lol.

**Snow Lepord:** Thank you, I'm glad you like it :)

**dragoness:** Ah, you will have to wait and see if it's a happy ending or not! I'm sorry I made you cry! I hope you won't cry at the end :)

**Miss S.P.:** Lol, thanks!

**Hopeless4life:** It was rather dramatic, wasn't it? Hehe, that's me all over. Thanks for reviewing!

**Anwinn:** Wow, thank you, I'm glad I'm keeping everyone in character! Wait and see for the ending :)

**Princess-Aiel:** Thanks! I shall :)

**Chou hime:** Hi! Yes, the poor man's very confused. Hope you like this chapter!

**LaPapillion:** I'm glad you like the tension and the conflict. Thanks for reviewing, and I hope you enjoy reading this :)

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### Chapter Seventeen

Vader and Luke stepped out of the turbolift into the Emperor's throne room. They were in the old Senate building, now the place of the Imperial Senate — where the Emperor resided and ruled.

Padmé had been told to stay below — Vader wanted to spare her from having to face the Emperor, and from having to witness what would happen to Luke — a fate that he himself did not know.

They walked forward and stood before the throne. Vader bowed to his master.



“Welcome, young Skywalker,” the Emperor said. ‘I have been expecting you.’ His gaze shifted to Luke’s binders. “You no longer need those.” He motioned with his finger and the binders clattered to the floor.

Luke stared at his hands, now free to strike, free to grab his lightsaber off his father and kill the Emperor. But he stayed still and did nothing.

“Guards, leave us,” the Emperor ordered. The red-cloaked guards at the entrance turned and disappeared into the turbolift. The hooded Sith Master turned his attention back to Luke. “I’m looking forward to completing your training. In time you will call me Master.”

“You’re gravely mistaken,” Luke replied, head held high in defiance. “You won’t convert me as you did my father.”

The Emperor stood and stepped down from the throne, walking up close to Luke. The evil of the Dark Side radiated from the Emperor, and Luke had to concentrate on not flinching from his gaze.

“Oh no, my young Jedi. You will find that it is you who are mistaken... about a great many things.”

“His lightsaber,” Vader rumbled. He extended the hilt of Luke’s lightsaber to the Emperor, who took it.

“Ah, yes, a Jedi’s weapon,” he muttered, examining it. “Your father’s old weapon. By now you must know your father can never become the man who once wielded this blade. He can never be turned from the Dark Side. So it will be with you.”

“You’re wrong,” Luke contradicted. “I will never join the Dark Side.”

“You will join us, or you will suffer.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Luke said calmly. “Even if you kill me, you will be overthrown. Your overconfidence is your weakness.”

“Your faith in your friends is yours,” the Emperor returned with a wicked smile. ‘You refer to an attack by your Rebel fleet. I assure you that they will not ever succeed.’ His smile was replaced with a very ugly look. “Everything that has transpired has done so according to *my* design. The Rebels will move base to Hoth in only days — they will arrive to meet full Imperial force. Your friends — and your pathetic Rebellion— will be destroyed.”

Luke’s eyes widened and his breath caught in his throat. He felt his fear for his friends rise, giving way to anger.

The Emperor smiled his cruel smile. “You are not leaving this building unless you join us, Skywalker. There is no way of saving your Rebel friends now.”

Luke clenched his fists, trying to keep in control of himself. His eyes were drawn to his lightsaber in Palpatine’s hand.

“You want this, don’t you?” the Emperor said, offering the hilt to him. “The hate is swelling in you now. Very good, take your Jedi weapon. Use it. I am unarmed. Strike me down with it. Give in to your anger. With each passing moment you make yourself more my servant.” He laughed, a dry, rasping sound that was jagged in Luke’s ears.

The young man shook his head. "No, never." But even as he said the words, he could feel his anger, his hatred of this evil being — and it filled him with despair. He tried desperately to calm himself and give these emotions to the Force.

"It is unavoidable," the Emperor leered at him. "It is your destiny. You, like your father, are now... mine."

No. The Emperor could not possibly know his future. He could not possibly see everything. Luke would never answer to Palpatine.

Luke closed his eyes. He would not yield to this monster. He would not allow his friends to die.

He stretched out his hand and his lightsaber flew from the Emperor's hand to his. In one smooth movement, he ignited it and swung it with all his strength on the Emperor's head. In that instant, Vader's red blade appeared, blocking Luke's attack bare centimetres above his Master's head.

Luke leapt back and turned to face his father. Vader raised his weapon, ready to attack.

Palpatine grinned and stepped back to his throne, settling back to enjoy the contest. All was coming to pass as he had transpired.

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Padmé could stand it no longer. She stood up and strode purposefully to the turbolift.

A guard stepped in front of her, blocking her way.

"I'm sorry ma'am, but I can't allow you to leave this floor," he said officiously.

"I wish to speak to my husband," she replied. "He is with the Emperor."

"I cannot allow you to leave this floor," he repeated.

She tried to push past, but he sidestepped, barring her from entry.

She drew herself up and levelled him with an icy glare. Though she was a small woman, she had an authoritative air and could be quite imposing when she wished to be. She thanked the Force that she had been a trained politician since childhood.

"I am Lady Vader. My husband will not be pleased if he hears of this insolence," she hissed, heart beating faster as she swelled with false confidence. "If you do not wish to face his wrath, I suggest you grant my request immediately."

She stared him down for a little longer, praying that her tactic had worked. The guard nodded and stepped aside.

She walked into the turbolift haughtily and pressed the button for the top floor, where she knew the Emperor's throne room was. She did not allow herself to slump until the doors slid shut, and she expelled a shaky breath. Her charade had worked.

*I'm coming, Luke...*

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Luke and Vader circled each other. Neither had gained the upper hand in the last few minutes. Every attack was blocked, every stab parried. The level of skill in this contest was impressive.

Luke lunged, stabbing more aggressively. His flurry of attacks, though met every time, were driving the Dark Lord back, slowly pushing him away.

Suddenly, Vader lost his footing and stumbled to his knees. Luke stood above him. The weight of the power he now held hit him hard.

He could kill him. Kill him and take his place at the Emperor's side. He could have all the power in the galaxy, just with a stab of his lightsaber.

Or he could kill him, and destroy the Emperor — absolute power.

Then he faltered. What was he doing? What was he thinking? It felt as though he was awakening from a dark dream, a nightmare. And he realised that his attack had come from hatred and anger — the Dark Side.

He took a step back and lowered his weapon — and in that instant, Vader sprang up, forcing Luke to raise his weapon defensively.

The blades locked, but Luke disengaged and leapt away.

"I will not fight you, Father." His voice rang out in the quiet chamber.

"You are unwise to lower your defences," Vader warned.

"I will not fight you," Luke repeated. "Here... take my weapon."

He deactivated his saber and flung it across the room at his opponent's feet. Vader used the Force to pick it up, and hooked it to his belt. Yet he did not attack. He reached out to his son, sensing his feelings.

"Give yourself to the Dark Side, Luke. It is the only way you can save your friends..." He paused, sensing another emotion. Fear for his — 'and your sister.' He smiled behind his mask — now, perhaps, he had found the key to turning Luke. "If you will not turn to the Dark Side, she can be made to."

*No! Leia!* And this was Luke's breaking point. Leia was too important, too pure to allow Vader to turn his attention to her.

"Never!" he screamed, calling his lightsaber to him and igniting it.

He rushed at Vader, raining blow after blow on him with a relentless passion he had never known. He pushed his opponent back to the wide windows behind the throne. Vader barely dodged a violent slash, and the windows shattered with the force of the blow, sending shards of glass onto the city far below.

The Sith was driven to his knees. He raised his weapon to block another attack — and Luke sliced Vader's hand off at the wrist. The mechanical hand tumbled out the window, along with the lightsaber.

Luke stared at the wires of his father's wrist, and Obi-Wan's words drifted back to him.

*The Dark Side makes a man into a machine of evil, and Vader is now more machine than man.*

He stared at Vader below him, trembling. He wanted to destroy this thing of darkness.

The Emperor had left his seat and stood close to them, chuckling. “Good! Kill him! Your hate has made you powerful! Now, fulfil your destiny and take your father’s place by my side!”

Luke stared from the Emperor to Vader, the point of his blade still at Vader’s throat. Vader was more a machine of evil than a man, but something had to build this machine, twist it into something unrecognisable. And that something had been the Dark side. Luke did not want to destroy his father. He wanted to destroy the darkness in him, break down the machine until the good man who was his father could come out. He wanted to defeat the darkness.

And to do that, he had to renounce it.

*Be calm, at peace. Passive.*

He stood erect and hurled his lightsaber away. It clattered to the floor. “Never! Never will I turn to the Dark Side! You have failed, Palpatine.” He had confronted the Dark Side, and he had gone beyond. “I am a Jedi, as my father was before me.”

The Emperor’s gleeful expression turned sharply into one of sullen fury.

“So be it, Jedi,” he growled dangerously. “If you will not be turned, you will be destroyed.”

Palpatine raised his arms — and bolts of blue-white lightning streamed from his fingers and tore over Luke. The young Jedi convulsed, in an agony beyond anything he had experienced before. The pain tore through him, and he grasped the arm of the throne, grabbing for anything that would stop the pain, but to no avail. The Emperor laughed maniacally as he watched Luke’s torment.

Vader crawled to his master’s side, the deadly Force lightning reflecting off his helmet.

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Padmé burst into the throne room and stopped for a split second when she saw the scene before her. She saw her husband trying to struggle to his feet beside the Emperor. She saw the Emperor, lightning flowing from his spindly fingers to Luke. And she saw her son, writhing in anguish and pain.

She didn’t stop to think.

“Luke!” she screamed, and flew towards him — and then the Emperor thrust one hand in her direction and she was caught in the same deadly web as her son, the bolts of lightning causing more pain than any physical injury she had ever suffered.

Vader was suffering a mental torment. His son and his wife lay there, screaming in pain, tortured by his master. His master, who had told him long ago that he could save his wife and children.

And suddenly, for the first time in years, he saw clearly. Palpatine had used his wife as a means of ensnaring him in his dark web. He had lied about Padmé's death, had filled his mind with doubts about the Jedi — his family — and had condoned the slaughter of millions of innocents. He had twisted him to turn against his best friend and mentor. He stood against everything Vader once had valued — democracy, peace, justice — and love. He was the embodiment of evil. He was the embodiment of the Dark Side. And he — Vader — had become the same.

Suddenly, Vader sensed a familiar old presence approach, accompanied by another one that felt both strange and well-known to him. His former Master, mentor and best friend was coming, and with him was his daughter. Obi-Wan was coming... coming to *save* Luke. And Vader suddenly realised that Obi-Wan had taken charge of Luke as a last tribute to the man he had trained and loved as a brother — a last tribute to *him*. He blinked and stared through his helmet at his weakening son, who cried out, "Father! Please!" He stared at his wife who twitched on the ground, crying "Anakin! Save me!" Both cries in voices laced with pain — pain that he had somehow caused himself, by following this dark path.

Memories flew through his mind. *"There is no other Jedi I would rather have at my side right now. No other man."* *"You're a good person, don't do this!"* *"I truly, deeply, love you."* *"You were my brother, Anakin. I loved you."* *"All I want is your love..."*

Love...

And he felt a dam burst inside of him, and he was overwhelmed. Love. Love for his wife. Love for his children. Love for his former master, who had been a friend, a brother — a *father* — to him. And it washed away the stains of hatred and anger that had been black in his soul for twenty years.

He rested inside himself for a brief moment. And he found strength beyond any other strength in the purity and goodness of this love.

He struggled to his feet and called Luke's — no, his own — lightsaber to him, igniting it as it flew to his left hand. His flesh hand. And with one mighty slash, he cut the Emperor in two, and Palpatine's body tumbled out the open window, falling hundreds of stories to the floor.

There was a blast, and a rush of air billowed through the window. He stumbled back, and dragged his son's unconscious body with him, moving over to where Padmé lay.

He set Luke down and then slumped to the floor beside his wife, weakening fast. She was breathing raggedly, and slowly she opened her eyes.

He reached up with his remaining hand, and awkwardly pulled off his black helmet, casting it aside. He no longer needed it. It had been used to cover the face of Padmé's killer, and that man was gone. Vader was gone.

"Padmé," he whispered hoarsely.

She smiled weakly and lifted a hand to caress his cheek. He raised his hand to grasp hers. In that one soft touch, his transformation was complete. He was no longer Darth Vader. He was Anakin Skywalker once more.

"My Anakin," she breathed, her smile growing. "I knew... I knew you'd come back."

And they both lost all thought as the room dissolved into black.

## Chapter Eighteen

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**A/N:** The end of the chapter originally was a semi-songfic to Hoobastank's The Reason, but, in accordance to guidelines, the lyrics have been scrapped and the writing has changed. Thanks for all your reviews -they're overwhelming my inbox, but in a good way! Still got the epilogue to go!

**DarthGladiator45:** You'll have to wait and see! ;)

**TriGemini:** Oh, wow, thank you so much for that review! Things will turn out a little differently than you expect, but I hope you like it anyway :) Your remarks about Leia were pretty interesting... hope your questions are answered here!

**Stephanie C:** The suit wasn't the mechanical one, that served as his organs etc. He just wore black, and the helmet was so he wouldn't have to look at his face. Hope that clears it up a little :) He's a little scarred, but not much. Glad you liked the chapter!

**padmenaberrie32:** Thank you! I'm glad you liked the chapter :)

**Chou hime:** Sorry! Here's more for you right away:)

**Jokerisdaking:** Aww, thank you! I'm glad I made you dance happily :) Here's the next chapter for you!

**LVB:** Thank you! I worked hard :) Hope your jaw isn't hurting, lol.

**dramaqueen872005:** Ah, you'll just have to see ;)...**wow...:** Thank you so much! I should have made that clearer — the arm that got cut off was, in fact, the mechanical one. Anakin only had one mechanical arm in the prequels, at least until he got burnt and sliced. Hope that clears it up!

**ChibiAzn3:** Thank you for reviewing! I'm glad you liked the chapters :)

**Greatstar:** Glad you liked the chapter :)

**Emerald Green Queen:** Oh my goodness, I'm so sorry! I read your review and I swear I typed a reply, but I guess it didn't... I'll reply to it now! Okay, your review on chapter 16 — I'm glad you liked the way I wrote the confrontation, and my intertwining of the movie and my storylines. And your review on chapter 17 — Thanks! I'm so glad you liked it :) I hope I meet your expectations! Thank you so much for reviewing as you do — I love reading them, even when I stupidly miss out on posting my replies!

**Angel Sanada:** Thanks! Just read on :)

**pokey:** Wow, thank you!

**Laura-chan:** I'm glad you liked it. I certainly will keep writing!

**Miss.S.P.:** Lol, thank you! I'll try to clear the helmet thing up — in my story, he's not severely injured by the flame. He's a little scarred etc from the burns, but he still had functioning organs, and the helmet was just so he wouldn't have to look at the face of his wife's killer — himself. Hope that's clearer!

**Linwe-Amari:** Lol, sure thing!

**Hopeless4life:** Don't cry! Here's the next chapter, read on!

**Princess-Aiel:** Oh, thank you! More is here :)

**doreenthatsnot:** Thanks! No, I haven't gotten mine yet. Can't wait to watch it again!

**Hunter Hatake:** Thank you! More has been written, although this chapter is second-last.

There's just the epilogue to go :)

**Bloodcast-Wench1989:** Thank you :) I'm glad you like it!

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## Chapter Eighteen

Anakin slowly opened his eyes and blinked. He saw sterile white and silver, and he realised he was lying down. Another blink and he could see that he was in a medcentre. His helmet was gone, and the weight of his black suit. He felt only the soft material of robes that reminded him of years long gone, years when he had been part of the Order.

He gazed at his surroundings for a moment, trying to remember how he had gotten here. His memories and thoughts turned inward, and he explored his mind.

He did not find the darkness.

He was no longer Vader.

As if in response to this realisation, he heard a familiar voice say, "Hello, Anakin."

He turned his head and saw Obi-Wan sitting by his bed.

"Obi-Wan!" he exclaimed, pushing himself up to a sitting position — and then his mixed emotions gave way to fear. Was his former master going to condemn and admonish him for his past deeds? He felt he deserved punishment. He no longer felt anger or hatred for his old mentor as he had before. He knew Obi-Wan was not to blame for his fall, had not turned anyone against him, and had simply done what he knew was right. His cheeks burned in intense shame and regret as he recalled his words and cruelty.

Obi-Wan smiled and placed a gentle hand on his shoulder. "Anakin, I am not going to condemn you," he told him. "You had my forgiveness long ago."

Tears began to well up in Anakin's eyes. "I don't deserve your forgiveness," he choked out, feeling like a Padawan once again.

"I was sorrowful for your turn, Anakin. I tried to bring you back, and I failed. I have failed you a great many times in my life. But I believed that there was a possibility that you still could return, that the evil of Darth Vader could be destroyed. And so it has come to pass, and I do not hate you. I am not angry. I am only glad. And I want to ask for your forgiveness, for failing you, and for not being the teacher you deserved."

Anakin blinked rapidly. "You don't need forgiveness, Obi-Wan. You were the best Master — the best *friend* — I could ever have asked for. You did your best." He paused, and when he spoke again, his voice was soft and full of remorse. "How can I ever atone for what I've done?"

"Do not dwell on the past. Yes, you made mistakes. You allowed lust for power to cloud your judgement. But you have renounced those ways, and the past is now in the past."

"Thank you, Obi-Wan," Anakin said in a voice thick with unshed tears. "You will always be a master to me. My brother. Will I have *your* forgiveness?"

Obi-Wan smiled. "There is nothing to forgive."



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“Luke!” Leia cried, throwing her arms around her brother, who had just woken up.

“Leia,” he greeted her, struggling to sit up when she released him.

Han strolled in. “Hey, kid,” he said cheerfully. “You’re looking better than when we picked you up. A little less crispy.”

Luke laughed. “Hi, Han,” he grinned. He looked around at the room of the medcentre he was in. “How did I get here?” he wondered aloud.

Leia glanced at Han. “It’s a bit of a story...” she said.

“Tell me.”

“All right.” Leia sat down at the foot of the bed, and Han took a seat on the chair beside her. “After you spoke to me, I still wasn’t comfortable with you going off by yourself. So I went to find Han to see if he would take me to find you. He was repairing the Falcon, because something broke.” Here she shot Han a look.

“Hey! It wasn’t my fault,” he protested. “It was Chewie.”

“Mhm. I had to wait for him to fix it, and just before he finished, Obi-Wan appeared. I knew he already knew what you were doing, so I told him I was going after you. He looked at me for a minute and said that you had to face him alone, but you may need help. He said you would be taken to the Emperor. So when Han had finally finished working on the Falcon —” another glare, “— we headed to Coruscant.”

“Wasn’t easy, kid,” Han put in. “There were Imperials everywhere.”

“Once we reached the Imperial Senate building, we encountered more opposition,” Leia continued. “I tried to get us in using my status as a Senator, but they recognised me as a Rebel. So Han had to... blast our way in.”

“They didn’t stand a chance against me,” Han added boastfully.

Leia rolled her eyes, but there was a smile on her face. “When we were halfway up, in the turbolift, I could feel you and Mother in terrible pain. I knew Obi-Wan felt it too. Just before the turbolift stopped, the sensation faded. Obi-Wan muttered ‘He is defeated’, and I was so afraid he meant you... and then we ran into the room, and you were all lying on the floor. We checked, and you were all fine... Mother’s hand was holding Father’s.”

“How did you get us out?” Luke asked.

“Chewbacca carried Fa... Father, Obi-Wan and I carried Mother, and Han carried you.”

“Yeah, you owe me, kid. Almost broke my back! The Imps weren’t too happy either, but we’d already taken care of most of them.”

Luke smiled. “So where are we now?”

“Coruscant had too many Imperials, and since the Emperor is dead, it was too dangerous to stay there. We’re on Yavin Four, at the Rebel base.”

“The Alliance isn’t moving to Hoth?” Luke asked, relief beginning to wash over him.

“Why would we need to?” Leia replied with a smile. “There is no Emperor, and we can withstand any petty attacks from a desperate, sinking Empire here.”

“So you feeling good enough to join the party?” Han grinned at Luke, slipping an arm around Leia’s waist.

“Party?”

“The end of the Empire — or, at least the Emperor. We’re taking time out to celebrate before we set about ending the war,” Leia explained with a smile. “The celebrations are going to last a month at least!”

Luke grinned at the two of them. “Wouldn’t miss it.”

---

Anakin stood at the edge of the celebrations, watching the Rebels dance and laugh and celebrate. He was suddenly struck with how miserable the Empire had made the galaxy. He wished he had made the right decisions earlier — he had not meant for so many good people to suffer and die. There were many things he wished he had not done, but he had learned from his mistakes now.

“Anakin,” came a soft voice behind him. He turned, and a smile spread on his face when he saw his beautiful wife.

His smile turned to uncertainty. He wanted nothing more to take her in his arms and hold her close, but remembering how he had treated her, how he had hurt her...

But all his doubts melted away when Padmé stepped forward, brought his head to hers and kissed him. For the first time in twenty years, he held his wife in his arms, felt the touch of her lips on his, breathed in the warmth of her closeness.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered when she broke away.

“For what?”

“Everything.”

She sighed and held him close, resting her cheek on his chest as she had done so often a long time ago.

“Anakin, just to have you back again is all I need,” she told him. “I know you’re sorry. And I have already forgiven you. I just want us to be together again. You are enough, just as you are.”

He kissed the top of her head and hugged her tightly. “I love you, Padmé.”

“I love you too, Anakin.” She lifted her head and he leaned down and kissed her again.

When they broke apart again, they looked up to see Leia, fingers entwined with Han’s, and Luke. Han gently disengaged his hand and Luke gave his twin a gentle push towards their parents.

Leia stepped forward, looking nervous, fiddling with her fingers. “Father,” she said softly, sounding stilted. She looked at her hands.

He smiled, albeit a little uncertainly. “Leia.” He reached forward and gently tilted her chin up to look into her eyes, noticing with a pang that she flinched slightly when he reached out. How could he take back memories and pain? How could he make amends for what he had done to her? ‘I’m so sorry for hurting you,’ he whispered sadly. “There is no excuse for what I did. I wish I could make the memory disappear. There is so much to be sorry for, and that is something I will have to live with every day. I can only hope that in the years to come, we can forge a true relationship. I do love you, Leia. Very much so. You are my family, and you are a part of me.”

Leia’s eyes filled with tears. Anakin hesitantly reached forward and hugged her lightly, awkwardly, feeling her stiffen — but then she relaxed and slipped her arms around him briefly. Anakin found as he held her, to his surprise, that there were tears in his eyes too.

Leia stepped back and took her place next to Han again. Anakin put his hand forward and shook Han’s. Obi-Wan had told him about the Corellian’s deeds in the Rebellion.

“Thank you, Captain, for everything you’ve done,” he said. “I trust you have been given a reward?”

Han grinned and looked down at Leia. “I sure have,” he replied. Anakin raised his eyebrows, and Leia nudged Han sharply, shooting him a half-cross, half-amused glare. “I mean, with your consent,” he added hastily.

“Consent for what?”

“Well...” Leia began, twisting her fingers as an odd smile spread across her face. “Han and I would like to... be married.”

Padmé gasped in delight and rushed forward to embrace her daughter.

“I think you have our consent,” Anakin laughed.

As Padmé congratulated the couple, Anakin turned to Luke.

“I knew there was still good in you,” the young Jedi smiled at his father.

“You did,” Anakin said. ‘Thank you, Luke. I would not have turned back if it weren’t for your faith in me.’ He looked over at his wife. “And your mother’s love.”

They were interrupted by a series of beeps and whistles. All five of them turned to see Artoo trundling up, accompanied by Threepio, Chewbacca and Obi-Wan.

“Artoo! Threepio!” Anakin said, surprised to see his old droids.

“The Maker!” Threepio exclaimed. “Oh, Master Anakin, it is so good to see you again.”

Anakin grinned. “You too, Threepio.”

Obi-Wan smiled at him, and Chewbacca moved next to Han. Anakin felt a hand slip into his, and he smiled at his wife. He took a moment to gaze at the people — and droids and Wookiee — around him. Here was his family, whether by blood, brotherhood, marriage or friendship. And it was for his family that he had turned from the darkness. His family had pulled him from the depths of black evil and brought him back into the light. Back into their midst. Back home.

Anakin Skywalker was no longer lost in the swirling darkness. He was home.

## Epilogue

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**A/N:** This is the end! It's quite sad — I've really enjoyed writing this story. But thank you so much for all your reviews, and just for reading this fic. It's been awesome, and look out for my short fics (I have a HUGE backlog of them, as I finished writing FFH six months ago, and needed to do something in the meantime!). MTFBWY :)

**TriGemini:** Thank you so much for faithfully reviewing every chapter! Your last review pretty much summed up what I thought :) I'm so glad you enjoyed this story, and thank you again for your support :D

**Stephanie C:** Hm, you know, I never thought of that. I guess not! Lol. Thank you for reviewing — I'm very happy you liked it!

**padmenaberrie32:** Yes, I'm a sucker for happy endings! Thanks for your reviews, and I'm glad I made you smile :)

**dramaqueen872005:** Yes, this is it! Just the epilogue. Thanks for reviewing, glad you liked this fic!

**pokey:** I do too! Thanks for reviewing, and thanks for enjoying it!

**LVB:** Thanks so much for reading this story and taking the time to review it! You and your work are an inspiration :)

**Jedi X-man Serena Kenobi:** Lol, thank you! I'm glad you loved it. Thanks for reviewing!

**Laura-chan:** Awww, thanks! Thank you for reviewing, and for liking this fic :)

**Anwinn:** I'm glad too! Thanks for your reviews.

**Uhm:** Well, I guess I didn't make it clear — the only fake limb he has is the mechanical arm he got on Geonosis. Otherwise, he's just scarred, not horribly disfigured and half-alive. He's pretty normal! Thanks for reviewing, I'm glad you like this story :)

**Miss.S.P.:** Yes, finished now! I'm glad you liked this story (I couldn't make it a sad ending, I'm too much of a sap!). Thanks for your support!

**Taeniaea:** Thank you very much!

**Mizra:** Oh wow, that's high praise indeed! Thank you so much for your reviews :)

**Nautica7mk:** Thanks! Glad you liked it.

**Princess-Aiel:** Thank you — and thanks for ALL your reviews :)

**Emerald Green Queen:** Your reviews always make me smile! Thank you so much — I'm glad that you found so much to enjoy in my story :)

**icewitch:** Thank you :)

**ElvenCompanion:** Thank you very much. I appreciate your review :)

**LaPapillion:** I totally agree — forgiveness is everything! Thank you so much for all your reviews — they're lovely :)

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### Epilogue

I am happy.

After twenty long years of struggling, fighting and hiding, I am finally safe and free.

My daughter is Chief of State of the New Republic, my son a Jedi Master of the New Jedi Order. I spend my days surrounded by friends and family, sometimes looking after my grandchildren when Han and Leia are called away. It is a peaceful, happy life.

My husband — my Anakin — and I are finally together again, and though he too is a Jedi Master, he is never far and always comes home as often as he can. We divide our time between Coruscant and Naboo — two homes.

Some days, when everyone is able, we eat dinner together — Anakin and I, Luke, Obi-Wan, Han and Leia and their children, even Chewbacca sometimes. We talk and laugh, and the atmosphere is warm and loving. It is everything I ever needed, everything I ever wanted.

The dull pain in my heart has gone, the love of my family and my husband washing away any trace of the hurt I suffered. I am finally whole, my family together again.

I am whole.

I am complete.

I am home.

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I am happy.

After twenty long years of darkness and lies, I am finally free.

I am free from the prison the Dark Side held me in, free from the choking hold my anger and hatred had had on me.

I am now a Jedi Master, teaching with Luke and Obi-Wan the ways of the Force to younglings.

I return home as often as I can, home to my beautiful wife and sometimes my children and grandchildren. For twenty years, I felt I had no home — and now I see that it was because I had no love. Home is where you love and are loved — and so I will always have a home now as long as I am with my family.

My relationships with my children have grown close, and it is as though those twenty years of my life have been wiped clean. I still feel saddened when I think of all the moments that were robbed from me by my choices — the twins' first words, first steps, their entire childhood... and all the memories that will continue to haunt me. But as Obi-Wan advised me, the past is now in the past.

All I wanted was to be a Jedi, then later, Padmé's husband. Now, I am a Master, I am finally together with my wife again, and I have a family. A home. It is more than I ever wanted, more than I ever needed. I am no longer lost.

I am whole.

I am complete.

I am home.

*Fin*